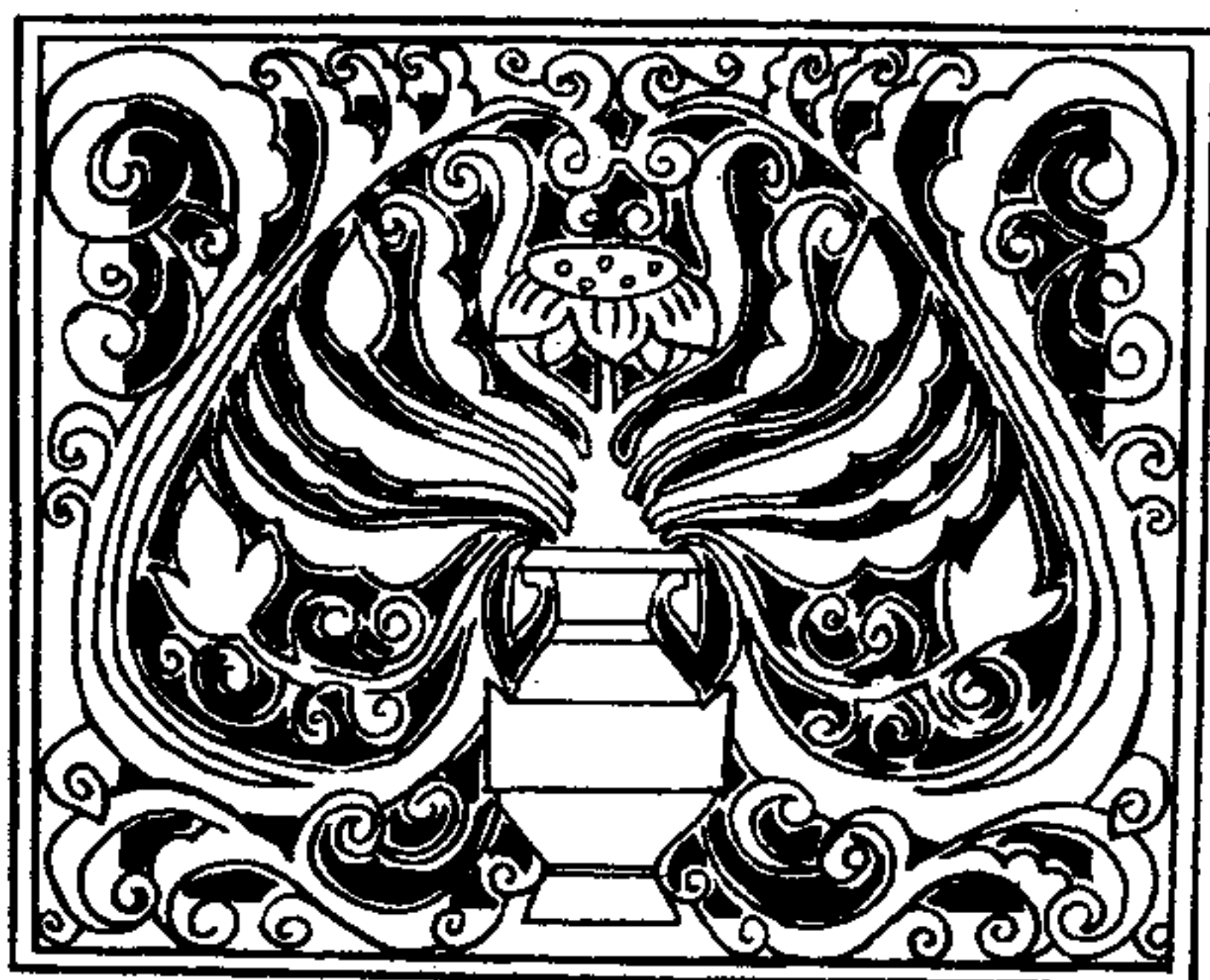




*In California*

Renunciation is always the ideal of every race;  
only other races do not know what they are made to do by nature unconsciously.



# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

A Monthly Journal of the  
Ramakrishna Order  
Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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Cover: A view of the Himalayas  
from Nepal

**JANUARY 1996**

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### ATTENTION: Subscribers in India

The label for posting the magazine is printed on the 15th of each month. Communication regarding change in address will have to reach us before the 15th to be effective from the following month. For short absence from your residence, it is always better to make alternative arrangements. Some subscribers have not stated their Pin Codes in their addresses. It is highly essential that you supply us the Pin Code immediately to help the postal department serve you better.

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Manager  
*Prabuddha Bharata*



उत्तिष्ठत  
जाग्रत  
प्राप्य  
वरान्निबोधत



# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED.

Vol. 101

JANUARY 1996

No. 1

## Salutations to Sri Ramakrishna

JANKINATH KAUL 'KAMAL'

*The author had composed and recited a fervently devotional hymn of thirteen verses during the dedication of the temple at Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Srinagar, Kashmir, in 1983 by Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, now the President of our Order. They were edited and shortened to ten verses by Swamis Baneshananda and Alokhananda, Belur Math, and are published below as a valuable addition to the existing body of hymns on Sri Ramakrishna.*

समस्तशास्त्रसाराय देशिकाय वेदविदे ।  
विश्वाब्धिपोतरूपाय रामकृष्णाय ते नमः ॥

*Samasta-śāstra-sārāya  
deśikāya veda-vide;  
Viśvābdhipota-rūpāya  
rāmakṛṣṇāya te namaḥ.*

To the soul of all the scriptures,  
The Guru, the knower of the Vedas,  
The boat that ferries (us across)  
the worldly ocean—  
To Thee, Ramakrishna,  
our salutations. (1)

स्वात्मराज्याधिराजाय स्वात्मसाम्राज्यदायिने ।  
सर्वसारस्वरूपाय रामकृष्णाय ते नमः ॥

*Svātma-rājyādhirājāya  
svātma-sāmrājya-dāyine;  
Sarva-sāra-svarūpāya  
rāmakṛṣṇāya te namaḥ.*

To the monarch of the kingdom of Self,  
The bestower of the Self-Supreme,  
The substance of all that exists—  
To Thee, Ramakrishna,  
we make obeisance. (2)

कर्तृकर्मक्रियातत्त्वबोधसारप्रदायिने ।  
शक्तिचक्रचमत्कारे त्यागरूपाय ते नमः ॥

*Karṭṛ-karma-kriyā-tattva-  
bodhasārāya-pradāyine;  
Śakti-cakra-camatkāre  
tyāgarūpāya te namaḥ.*



To the giver of the knowledge of  
the Truth  
Which governs the doer, the action  
(and) the process of doing,  
The embodiment of renunciation  
Amidst the bewitching manifestations  
of Shakti—  
To Thee (Ramakrishna),  
we pay homage. (3)

रश्मिजालज्वलत्सारतेजरूपस्वरूपिणे ।  
बिन्दुनादकलातीत-बिन्दुरूपाय ते नमः ॥

*Raśmijāla-jvalatsāra-  
tejarūpa-svarūpine;  
Bindu-nāda-kalātita-  
bindurūpāya te namaḥ.*

To the radiant sun from whom  
Emanate numerous rays of light,  
The Parā Bindu  
Transcending Nāda, Bindu (and) Kalā\*  
To Thee (Ramakrishna),  
we make obeisance. (4)

जन्ममृत्युजराव्याधि-द्वैतदाह-विदाहिने ।  
जाग्रत्स्वप्नसुषुप्त्यादौ तुर्यरूपाय ते नमः ॥

*Janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhi-  
dvaita-dāha-vidāhine;  
Jāgrat-svapna-susuptyādaū  
turya-rūpāya te namaḥ.*

To the destroyer of the agonies of  
duality  
Of birth, death, old age (and) disease,  
The Turiya who seemingly abides  
in the states

Of waking, dream (and) deep sleep—  
To Thee (Ramakrishna),  
our salutations go. (5)

मातृमानप्रमेयाय मितिगर्भस्वरूपिणे ।  
ग्राह्यग्राहकसंक्षोभे द्वन्द्वातीताय ते नमः ॥

*Mātr-māna-prameyāya  
mitigarbha-svarūpine;  
Grāhya-grāhaka-saṅkṣobhe  
dvandvātītāya te namaḥ.*

To the knower, known (and)  
knowing in one,  
The essence of right knowledge,  
The Absolute in the commotion  
Involving the perceiver (and)  
the perceived—  
To Thee (Ramakrishna),  
we make obeisance. (6)

वरदाय वरेण्याय वामकेश्वरमूर्तये ।  
तीर्णविश्वविरूपाय विश्वरूपाय ते नमः ॥

*Varadāya vareṇyāya  
vāmakeśvara-mūrtaye;  
Tīrṇa-viśva-virūpāya  
viśvarūpāya te namaḥ.*

To the bestower of boons, the adorable,  
the serene,  
The formless Transcendent,  
the Immanent—  
To Thee (Ramakrishna),  
we make obeisance. (7)

भैरवीभावपूर्णाय मातृभावस्वरूपिणे ।  
विश्वोल्लासविलासाय विश्ववन्द्याय ते नमः ॥

*Bhairavī-bhāva-pūrṇāya  
mātrbhāva-svarūpine;*

\* Parā Bindu, Nāda, etc. are Tantrik terms referring to the ultimate Reality and Its various states prior to Its manifestation as the cosmos.

*Viśvollāsa-vilāsāya  
viśva-vandyāya te namaḥ.*

To the one filled with  
Supreme-Consciousness,  
The embodiment of Divine  
Motherhood,  
Whose pastime is the splendours  
of the universe,  
Who is adored by all—  
Before Thee (Ramakrishna),  
we prostrate. (8)

विवेकानन्दवन्द्याय विवेकानन्ददायिने ।  
शारदास्वान्तःसेव्याय रामकृष्णाय ते नमः ॥

*Vivekānanda-vandyāya  
vivekānanada-dāyine;  
Śārada-svāntaḥ-sevyāya  
rāmakṛṣṇāya te namaḥ.*

To the one who is worshipped  
by Vivekananda,  
The bestower of the joy of  
discrimination,  
Who is cherished by Mother Sarada  
in her heart—  
To Thee, Ramakrishna,  
our salutations go. (9)

रामकृष्णसदानन्द महामोहविनाशिने ।  
मन्मथारि-मरुत्सार-मन्त्रसाराय ते नमः ॥

*Rāmakṛṣṇa-sadānanda  
mahāmoha-vināśine;  
Manmathāri-marut-sāra-  
mantra-sārāya te namaḥ.*

O Ramakrishna! The perennial bliss!  
To Thee  
The destroyer of enchanting illusion,  
the foe of lust, the Breath Divine,  
The goal of all mantras—  
We make obeisance. (10)

‘First of all,’ the Buddha said, ‘happiness is not the result of gratifying sense desires. Sense pleasures give the illusion of happiness, but in fact they are sources of suffering.’

‘It is like a leper who is forced to live alone in the forest. His flesh is wrecked by terrible pain day and night. So he digs a pit and makes a fierce fire, and he stands over it to seek temporary relief from his pain by toasting his limbs over the fire. It is the only way he can feel any comfort. But, miraculously, after a few years, his disease goes into remission, and he is able to return to a normal life in the village. One day he enters the forest and sees a group of lepers toasting their limbs over hot flames just as he once did. He is filled with pity for them, for he knows that in his healthy state he could never bear to hold his limbs over such fierce flames. If someone tried to drag him over the fire he would resist with all his might. He understands that what he once took to be a comfort, is actually a source of pain to one who is healthy.’

The Buddha said, ‘Sense pleasures are like a pit of fire. They bring happiness only to those who are ill. A healthy person shuns the flames of sense desires.’

# The Universal Gospel

Music by John Schlenck

Texts compiled from world scriptures

An oratorio on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna  
for chorus, soloists and synthesizers

*Performed at the Convocation of Global Religions, New York, in July 1994 as a part  
of the Centenary Celebration of the Vedanta Society of New York.*

## 1. Truth Is One

Chorus: *Ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti:* (Rig Veda: I. clxiv. 46).  
Truth is One; sages call it by various names:  
Brahman, Atman, Tao, Ahura-Mazda,  
Buddha, Allah, Holy One of Israel,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
Mother of the Universe;  
Tao, God, Ram, Lord, Ahura-Mazda,  
Brahman, Atman, Allah, Buddha, Krishna,  
Holy One of Israel, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
Mother of the Universe.  
*Ekam sat:* Truth is One; sages call it by various names.

## 2. Paths Are Many

Bass solo: *Shema yisrael: hashem elohenu,*  
*Hashem echad.* (Deuteronomy: 6.4)

Chorus: Hear, O Israel: the Eternal is our God,  
The Eternal is One.

Tenor solo: *Al-hamdu lillahi Rabbil-Alameen,* (Al-Koran: 1.1, 2)  
*Arrahman-irraheem.*

Chorus: Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds,  
The beneficent, the merciful.  
*Buddham sharanam gacchami;*  
*Dhanimam sharanam gacchami;*  
*Sangham sharanam gacchami.* (Traditional Buddhist)

Soprano solo: I take refuge in the Buddha;  
I take refuge in the law of righteousness;  
I take refuge in holy community.



Chorus: *Pater noster qui es in coelis* (Matthew: 6.9, 10)  
*Sanctificetur nomen tuum*  
*Adveniat regnum tuum fiat voluntas tua sicut*  
*In coelo et in terra.*  
 Our Father who art in heaven,  
 Hallowed be thy name;  
 Thy kingdom come, thy will be done  
 On earth as it is in heaven.

Chorus: *Tat savitur varenyam bhargo devasya dhimahi* (Rig Veda: III. 62. 10)  
*Dhiyo yo nah prachodayat.*  
 We meditate on the glory of the divine Being  
 Who illumines all things;  
 May he guide our understanding.

(Composite prayer, chorus and soloists in counterpoint)

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chorus: We meditate on the Eternal<br>Lord of the Worlds,<br>Law of Righteousness.<br>His kingdom come,<br>His will be done;<br>May he illumine us<br>With beneficence and mercy<br>And bless us in holy community. | Soloists: <i>Hashem elohenu,</i><br><i>Rabbil-Alameen,</i><br><i>Dhammam sharanam gacchami.</i><br><i>Adveniat regnum tuum</i><br><i>Ficut voluntas tua sicut;</i><br><i>Nah prachodayat</i><br><i>Arrahman-irraheem,</i><br><i>Sangham sharanam gachhami.</i> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

### 3. The Truth Shall Make You Free

Chorus: You shall know the truth (John: 9. 32)  
 And the truth shall make your free.  
*Atma va are drashtavyaha:* (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad: II. 4. 5)  
 This Atman is to be realized.  
*Shrotavyo mantavyo nididhyasitavyo:*  
 Think of it, reflect on it, meditate upon it.  
 Hold fast to the truth as a lamp; (Buddha's last message)  
 Seek salvation in the truth alone.  
 You shall love your God the Eternal (Deuteronomy: 6. 5)  
 With all your heart, with all your soul,  
 And with all your might.  
 You shall love your neighbour as yourself. (Leviticus: 19. 18;  
 Matthew: 22. 39)  
 Blessed are the pure in heart, (Matthew: 5. 8)  
 For they shall see God.  
 With heart purified by yoga, (Bhagavad-Gita: 6. 28)  
 Attain the bliss of Brahman.

Alto solo: *Sarvabhutastham atmanam* (Bhagavad-Gita: 6. 31)  
*Sarvabhutani chatmani*  
*Ikshate yoga yuktatma*  
*Sarvatra samadarshanah:*

Chorus: Seeing the one Self in all beings  
 And all beings in the Self...  
 You shall love your neighbour as yourself. (Leviticus: 19. 18;  
 Matthew: 22. 29)  
 Wherever you turn, there is Allah's countenance. (Al-Koran: 2. 115)  
 Blessed are they who attain Nirvana, (The Gospel of Buddha: 3. 13, 14)  
 Above life and death;  
 Blessed are they who become an embodiment  
 Of truth and loving kindness.  
 Allah saith, follow my law (The Sayings of Muhammad: 204)  
 And become like unto me...  
 ...the merciful, the beneficent. (Al-Koran: I: 1, 2)  
 Be ye therefore perfect even as your (Matthew: 5. 48)  
 Father in heaven is perfect.

Soloists: *Sarvabhutastham atmanam* (Bhagavad-Gita: 6. 31)  
*Sarvabhutani chatmani*  
*Ikshate yoga yuktatma*  
*Sarvatra samadarshanah.*

Of that (Self), which is not available for the mere hearing to many, (and) which many do not understand even while hearing, the expounder is wonderful and the receiver is wonderful; wonderful is he who knows under the instruction of an adept.

The Self is not certainly adequately known when spoken of by an inferior person; for It is thought of variously. When taught by one who has become identified with It, there is no further cogitation with regard to It, for It is beyond argumentation, being subtler even than the atomic quantity.

This wisdom that you have, O dearest one, which leads to sound knowledge when imparted only by someone else (other than the logician), is not to be attained through argumentation. You are, O compassionate one, endowed with true resolution. May our questioners be like you, O Naciketa....

It cannot be attained through speech, nor through mind, nor through eye. How can It be known to anyone apart from him who speaks of It as existing?

—Katha Upanishad, I.ii.7–9 and II.iii.12



# To Our Readers

Our Hearty New Year Greetings to *PB*'s readers, contributors, reviewers, advertisers and well-wishers. Also to the many unknown who benefiting from this journal have shared its thoughts with acquaintances, thus enriching each other's life and helping in *PB*'s aims.

Last year we had issued a Special Number commemorating *PB*'s entry into its 100th year. That was highly appreciated both by readers and reviewers, who particularly mentioned the high quality of the contents and low price per copy (pp. 416, Rs. 20/-). The latter of course was possible because the actual cost of production (roughly Rs. 70/- per copy) was partly covered by the advertisers. Besides, help came from unexpected donors—here and abroad—who responded to our Appeal on the back cover of that Number. Our thanks to all of them.

Some readers kindly wrote to us pointing out a few errors in the text of that issue. The major ones: on pp. 310, 316, 317 ('The Reach for Meaning...', Pravrajika Varadaprana)—Václave (Havel) should have been Václav; pp. 2, 182 ('India's Spirit'), the author's name should have been Dr. Huston (not Houston) Smith, and in our introductory note about him the missing word at the end is *books*; in *some* issues the sequence of the pages between 364 and 371 ('Who Can Pioneer a Religious Movement', Dorothy Madison) was found to have got shuffled. We convey our sincere regrets to all these eminent writers and also to others in whose contributions too errors might have similarly remained undetected.

On the whole, though, the Special Number was a success. Some articles that could not be accommodated there—for want of space and, mostly, because they reached us a little late, or because no matter how hard we tried we failed to get them ready in time—were published in the subsequent issues. Another point about these 11 issues (Feb. to Dec.), which has possibly gone unnoticed and might pleasantly surprise you, is that they carried 48 pages, not the usual 40! Any way, more pages apart, we hope you enjoyed reading them.

Culminating the Centenary Year numbers is the present one, again an extra special, with almost double the number of pages in the usual January Specials. This time also, thanks to our helpful contributors, we have managed to collect interesting articles. Further, as with most of last year's numbers, to the present one too we have added select contributions from the youth. Please go through them as well. For, you will be delighted to see that, in the midst of the worrisome and crassly materialistic scenes laid out daily by the media, there still are such young, innocent, trusting minds deriving inspiration from Swamiji's Message.

So, then, we expect you will find this publication also satisfying and useful.

*Tejasvi-nāvadhītam-astu*: May our study be vigorous and effective. □



## New Year Hopes

Talking about inspiration from Swamiji, it is right that having weathered another stormy year we now calmly consider his Message of Renunciation and Service. This will clear our sights and attitudes before we begin yet another year of hard work and hopes. One of the hopes certainly is that the year will be better. So it may well turn out to be, provided our motivations and outlook are clean and firm.

This mind-mending is something like a farmer's repairing and strengthening his fence before commencing a fresh round of cultivation. Troublesome animals and people capable of damaging the crops have never been totally eliminated. But the feasible protection against them is a sturdy fence—and a well-oiled rifle. Similarly, the world outside can never be made perfect for us; the forces likely to thwart our struggles to harvest peace, cooperation and development may never get permanently neutralized. We can only try and keep trying to bolster *our* defences. And for human beings the primary, easily available and most potent protection is right attitude or motivation. That is to say, a proper view of life and a practical way of applying that to life.

Against this, however, wrong attitudes are our worst foes. Earthquakes and cyclones and hardened wicked people are formidable powers against us, no doubt. But many times more devastating are distorted mental attitudes, like traitors within our homes; for instance, intense individualism (not to be mistaken for individuality), greed, caste-religion-race-prejudice, and excessive preoccupation with food and sex. The con-

sequences of these are all here for us to see. Several persistent problems can be cited:

If it is caste vs caste or tribals vs non-tribals inhumanity here, elsewhere it is colour vs colour or natives vs immigrants; bride-burning for dowry here, matched in the 'liberated' West by wife-battering, divorces, Susan Smiths, millions of unwed mothers, and minor-mothers dumping their bothersome months-old babies into garbage-cans so they could attend parties; child-marriage in one country—millions of teenage pregnancies in another country; 'unliberated', unemployed and under-nourished women in one part of the world, equalled by 'liberated' women in another part fighting sexual harassment at the work place, and gender discrimination in employment.

If males in one society stand accused of enforcing female circumcision or oppressing their wives, then in another 'enlightened' society men stand accused of flying off to Third World countries to exploit minor girls and boys. Again, Hindu-Islamic quarrels here, competing, as it were, with ethnic cleansing and Christian-Islamic fighting elsewhere; diseases as wages of opulence somewhere—malnutrition and deaths due to poverty and regional wars in another place with arms supplied by the opulent; promises of knowledge-revolution through computers coming from one direction—fears of cyber-wars being heard from another direction.

Too long a New Year blacklisting? Perhaps, but please bear it, for it is merely

meant to prove our point: Unraveled to their core these ailments are all results of skewed attitudes. Without finding ways to treat such attitudes, country after country has tried its utmost to mitigate the ills of its citizens and failed. Not one succeeded in making them feel safer or happier. The few successes, if they can be so called, are limited to economic and technological fields. But

view nations as a *mass* of people. They also foresee that concepts of self, presently unknown, are bound to arise when the preceding factors alter individual roles and family and social relationships.

Add to these the intensifying clamour for a holistic approach in governmental planning; studies in consciousness;

*The Lord once more came to you as Buddha and taught you how to feel, how to sympathise with the poor, the miserable, the sinner, but you heard Him not...Your priests invented the horrible story that the Lord was here for deluding demons with false doctrines!*

—Swami Vivekananda

these, mocking our expectations, have only aggravated and spread wider the sickness of inverted motivations in the minds of people. The majority are acutely feeling the breakdown of community, loss of life's meaning, and lack of supportive social norms.

Are things going to get better, or worse? Better, doubtlessly, and we are not suffering from utopianism. Our optimism is drawn from Swamiji's Message and the remarkably promising observations of futurists such as Alvin and Heidi Toffler. They foresee, notwithstanding the bleak events referred to above, that the follies of the past decades, which are the bad fruits of limited perspectives and warped attitudes, are cumulatively compelling leaders to adopt longterm planning; to initiate programmes that will physically and psychologically stabilize the family, and therefore the community-feeling, by reducing the necessity of migration (as in industrial societies) and of spouses having to work in different places; to recognize the importance of individuality (not to be confused with individualism) and the advantages from fostering human diversities, much more than from continuing to

attempts to relate quantum mechanics (as by the famous mathematician Roger Penrose\*) and the life process in cells; and the growing number of beneficiaries of meditation and yoga in one form or other.

Add again one more line of thought of which the obverse is the lament over desecration of human life and the cosmos, and the reverse the felt need for reviving the concept of science as sacred.\*\*

Where will all these emerging ideas lead us to? Say, 'long-range planning'. What does that imply? Few years? Decades? Centuries? At the personal level, what new attitudes might individuals develop when

\* A portion of an interview with him which appeared in *The Telegraph*, Calcutta, 21 March 1995, captioned 'Labyrinths of Consciousness', is reproduced at the end of the editorial, after the quotation from Swamiji.

\*\* See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Need for a Sacred Science*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1993. Some significant extracts from this book also are given after the above interview.



they begin to look at their lives bearing in mind the perplexing phases of a human's lifespan, and not be impelled only by shortrange views or by the urge for immediate gratification? What when people begin to judge their individual actions in relation to their social ramifications? In what unforeseen ways might these affect the minds producing the national or global agenda?

So with individuality and new concepts of self. What changes might come in people's feelings about themselves when

pointed out that within 200 years of Lord Buddha's passing away India reached the pinnacle of her secular and spiritual glory? And that as a result the world too was immensely benefited and ennobled? Surprisingly, Buddha did not preach a new physics or a new theology bearing on economics or politics. He simply practised and taught universal love, compassion, and negation of the ordinary petty selfhood. He broadcast his discoveries about self, individuality, longterm planning—planning our lives, thoughts and conduct in the perspective of the whole of life, nature of

*'Cogito, ergo sum: I think, therefore I am.'* —Descartes

*'What's so exciting is that the philosophical questions raised by the Greeks are coming within the province of science.'*

—Patricia Churchland,  
Professor at the University of California, San Diego  
quoted in *Time*, 11 September 1995.

psychologists and neurologists discover unimagined depths of personality, individuality, mind and consciousness by turning towards and into *themselves* as well—in addition to wiring their patients to get answers regarding mind etc.?

True, no one can answer with certainty, for, 'life' is too complex, and 'humanity', 'world', 'universe', 'future', etc. are matters so vast for ordinary human minds to fathom. Nevertheless, a qualitative change in human motivations and activities appears inevitable. A change which in essence could be put as—an enlightened holistic concept of self; perception of life as sacred; and expression of these two in mutual concern and help.

Naturally we also feel tempted to play the optimistic futurists, taking courage from Swamiji's Message. Remember he had

existence, and so on. These in turn created new mental attitudes that ushered in peace and prosperity.

So, isn't there reason enough to feel elated that we are about to begin moving closer by another year to the second century after Swamiji's passing away? He too discovered and taught the insignificance of the ordinary self and individualism, the divinity of the higher self of all beings, and the sanctity of all existence; and also the necessity of expressing these through universal love and active concern for others. In substance these constitute his Message of Renunciation and Service, the similarity of which with Buddha's message is obvious. And examined broadly it is towards this that the positive trends predicted by the futurists appear to be tending. As with Lord Buddha's advent and the quiet influence of his teachings on society, so it seems to be



with Swamiji's advent. His Message, we think, is gradually changing the direction of prevalent thought-currents.

Consider renunciation, implying the giving up of our biological self-identity following a fundamental spiritual transformation in that identity. This seems to be slowly coming with developments in social, psychological and environmental studies, and the popularity of yoga and meditation. Further, to us the 'True love can wait' vow taken by some two lacks of teenagers in the USA—that they shall abstain from premari-  
tal sex, is extremely significant. Since that was organized by religious (Christian) institutions, clearly there was a holy

bodies, religious organizations and international groups have been rendering service to millions of people. In the past years some of them had restricted their services to their 'own' people, and sometimes were motivated by narrow considerations. Today, however, that partisan 'service' is on its way out. For, it is politically impossible, and contradicts the ideal behind service. The nobility of *universal* concern is taking hold of those eager to serve; and the importance of respecting the dignity of the receiver too is being recognized.

Thus, in the light of all that is happening at the subtler levels and almost simultaneously in so many fields, who would

### *Americans take vow of chastity*

*A total of 2,11,163 young Americans of both sexes have taken a public vow of chastity before marriage by planting signed cards proclaiming their sexual abstinence on the lawns of the Mall in Washington.*

*President Bill Clinton received a delegation of young people...at the White House who had responded to 'the true love waits' movement launched by Baptist congregations in the southern States.*

*The movement is now supported by 26 Christian organizations and denominations.*

*The signed cards bore the legend: 'Believing that true love waits, I make a commitment to God, myself, my family, those I date, my future mate and my future children to be sexually pure until the day I enter marriage.'*

impulse behind that vow. And the tendency to see sex and marriage, and therefore the family, as sacred is an important part of viewing life as sacred; it is also a sign of spiritual awakening—even if those teenagers were unaware of these implications. So a shift in attention, small and promising, from oneself as mere body to something higher has begun.

As for service, it has been there for long—hundreds of individuals, private

firmly brush aside the possibility of humanity's developing novel and edifying outlooks in the coming decades?

We are fortunate to be already in the line of flow of the forces silently working to uplift humanity. Let us therefore begin the New Year by further filling our minds with these thoughts on the divinity of individuality, and Renunciation and Service. Since all life is sacred, therefore Renunciation—of our excessive concern with body

and sex and materialistic ways of life; and hence an effort to concretely express that Renunciation by rendering Service—without considering caste, colour, religion, gender or nationality. For, actual service is one of the strongest means of reinforcing our conviction in our higher and nobler self; and in the Message that our ordinary selfhood can be easily refined into higher states by

regulating our biological self-identity through Service.

As the world appears to be moving in the direction of enlightenment through experience, expanding knowledge, and basic changes in outlooks and motivations, let us enter the New Year with a renewed commitment to Swamiji's Message.



He who is in you and outside you,  
Who works through all hands,  
Who walks on all feet,  
Whose body are all ye,  
Him worship, and break all other idols!...

Ye fools! who neglect the living God,  
And his infinite reflections with which the world is full,  
While ye run after imaginary shadows,  
That lead alone to fights and quarrels,  
Him worship, the only visible!  
Break all other idols!

—'The Living God', Swami Vivekananda



### 'LABYRINTHS OF CONSCIOUSNESS' (From *The Telegraph*)

*Would insights arise by elements in the brain harnessing the noncomputable elements of the world you talked of in TENM (The Emperor's New Mind)?*

(Mr. Penrose:) You see, the main reason for believing in noncomputable elements is Godel's Theorem. Produced in 1930, it was aimed at the then established Formal System (FS) of mathematics. What Godel showed, basically, is that whatever mathematical system you produce, it could never be broad enough to encompass all of mathematical

understanding. To be more precise, if you have an FS where you can address mathematical questions (say, arithmetical questions like Fermat's Last Theorem) which could be formulated as precise statements, then, there are certain rules as to what would constitute a proof; so, you can automatically check without thinking whether a proof is a proof. Put it on a machine and you'll get a YES or a NO. What Godel showed is that if you believe that any FS gives you truths, that the rules it gives you are actually okay, that it doesn't give any false rules, then you are sure without further argument that the precise things of interest are EITHER TRUE OR FALSE.



Godel's bombshell is: if you believe the rules are laid down, then you must also believe in some rules that go beyond, a rule which the system itself is incapable of producing. Thus the formalist view which wants to reduce all of maths, or some well defined area of it, to mechanical computation, simply can't do so. There will always be something where your insights need to come back in, which you could not get without using your insights.

I mentioned this briefly in *TENM*, and a lot of people got the wrong end of the stick and raised certain issues some of which had to be looked at more seriously. The first half of my new book, *Shadows of the Mind*, is really addressing in a lot of detail those arguments which try to attack Godel's argument. For instance, neural networks, systems which are preprogrammed to learn by experience: the claim is that in this way you can evade the Godel argument. But the first part of *Shadows* argues that you can't really get around the argument by any argument of this nature.

So, what this tells me is that there is, in human mathematical understanding (how you understand things), something that is not computational.

*What's so special about maths?*

Nothing. It's only in maths that you can prove a theorem about such things. But these things must apply to all aspects of human understanding. And understanding is only one aspect of consciousness. Since this rather limited aspect of it is noncomputable, the whole floodgates are wide open: there is something noncomputable in conscious thinking. And the second part of the book is to try to come to terms with what it might be that is involved. So the first part is really mathematics or psychology, something to do with AI. And the second part has

to do with physics and physiology. The view is that consciousness is a feature of brain activity.

Godel himself thought that the non-computability he discovered in mathematics showed that mind is beyond the physical brain, but I'm not taking that line. I'm saying that if you did understand the very subtle physics of what's going on in the brain, then, whatever consciousness is would have to arise out of that. But I am also saying that it's something beyond present-day physics because, in principle, present-day physics looks as though it's basically a computational science: you could, in principle, reduce it to computation. So I say, 'something beyond present-day physics', and here's where I'm a little bit more specific. I latch on to the border line between classical and quantum phenomena. I'm very much of the opinion that there is something missing in present-day quantum mechanics.

*Are you saying there is nothing in present-day physics like that?*

You see, when you try to come to terms with the fact that we can do noncomputable things with our minds and the seeming fact that our minds are features of our physical brains, then, some physical action would have to be noncomputable. That's why I say 'some new physics'. But then, the other question is: what's it got to do with the actual actions of the physical brain?

And then there is something quite different that I didn't know about when I wrote *TENM*, which has to do with microtubules (MTs). Microtubules are part of the cytoskeleton (a boundary within which the parts of a cell lie and are articulated); in one-celled animals the cytoskeleton seems to control how they move, which can be quite complicated. Amoeba and paramecium can swim around, approach food, etc. Paramecium



seems to have a control system which is certainly not a nervous system, because it's a single-cell animal, and a nervous system requires a collection of cells. MTs are made up of molecules which are protein-like substances called Tubulin Dimers. According to one view, they actually behave like a computer: they have two states, depending on where an electron is situated, and quite complicated messages whiz along the tubes. In paramecium the tubes themselves control the hairs with which it swims. So, the MTs control the cell, seem to have some kind of computational activity going on, and, there is one view that we should look much deeper down than the computational level.

I talk about this because neurons themselves have their own cytoskeletons, with MTs that go down the entire length of the axon to the dendrites. The MTs seem to be responsible for controlling and maintaining the strengths of the synapses, places where one neuron joins up with the next. That's very important, because I now think that nerve signals are things you can treat like a classical computer. But, that computer is changing all the time. What controls the changes is at a deeper level of activity which has to do with these MTs. The computational activity isn't very exciting, but the tubes themselves are by far the best chance I've seen for producing the kind of isolated quantum state needed for the kind of view I'm putting forward.

The view is that you have some large-scale, coherent quantum state which covers large areas of the brain via the MT network: there would have to be some coherence right across the brain. Consciousness would, ideally, be something to do with this, but, in particular, there would have to be some kind of weak link between the quantum activity and the computational activity which is where the non-computable qualities have to be fed in.

That is precisely where the reduction of the quantum state makes its mark. We really can't do it, though, using either present-day classical physics or present-day quantum physics. We need a theory that bridges the gap and that's where I believe the MTs will come in. It might be hard, but would be marvellous, if experimentalists could find some ingenious way of measuring the large-scale quantum coherence.



(Quoted from Seyyed Hossein Nasr's  
THE NEED FOR A SACRED SCIENCE)

Even if the term sacred science is used from time to time, it is in relation to ancient civilizations and bygone days. It appears, therefore, even more strange that one should speak of the need for a sacred science in a world where not everyone understands what is meant by sacred science and fewer still are aware of its absence and therefore have a conscious sense of need for such a science. And yet there does in reality exist a profound need for a sacred science in a world which, having lost such a science, is groping in the dark for many false substitutes and also suffers grievously from the lack of such a science even if it remains unaware of the causes for this suffering (p. 1).

The destruction of the wholeness of human life so decried today and the ever increasing and greater compartmentalization of the human mind and disintegration of the human psyche, are ultimately related to the loss of principial knowledge, and the subsequent segmentation of what men learn and know (p. 81).

Many works by environmentalists and even certain scientists have called for men to turn towards qualitative growth, to the so-called 'finer things of life' rather than remain



bound completely to the quest of purely material objects (p. 85). (Here the author refers to two books: J. Rifkin, *Biosphere Politics*, New York, 1991; R.F. Nash, *The Right of Nature*, London, 1989).

This lowering of ethical standards and even bewilderment as to which ethical system is meaningful might seem outwardly to be independent of Western Science and its applications, and many in fact have argued in favour of this thesis. But closer scrutiny reveals that the two are inseparable. **Norms of ethical behaviour are inseparable from the view held by men concerning the Ultimate Reality** (pp. 85–6). (Put in bold letters by us.)

...both Western science and technology are in a state of flux and rapid change, beset with uncertainties about which direction they will follow in the future. In physics there are signs of the need for a completely new look at basic particles. Some even speak of the psychon as a 'psychic' particle to add to the number of existing particles to explain certain phenomena.... There is no real cosmology—which can only come from higher metaphysical principles—in the West today, and despite all the attempts made (such as the pseudo-synthesis of Teilhard de Chardin), no satisfactory general worldview has been established within which to situate all that man knows and observes in the world about him, not to speak of the world within and beyond. (Here the author refers to T. Burckhardt, 'Traditional Cosmology and the Modern World', in his *Mirror of the Intellect*, trans. W. Stoddart, Albany, New York, 1967, p. 13ff; and, on the false premises of

Teilhardism, to W. Smith, *Teilhardism and the New Religion*, Rockford, Illinois, 1988.)... The same can be seen in biology, where...there are signs of new interest in a worldview in which the morphology of living forms have a meaning in themselves rather than simply in terms of their chemical components. Finally, in psychology and psychoanalysis **after several decades of tyrannical rule by those counterfeits and parodies of traditional doctrines which Freudianism and Jungianism represent, there is now an awareness that these modern disciplines have failed utterly to penetrate into the inner nature of the human soul as it is grounded in and related to the Spirit** (pp. 87–8; here the author refers to J. Needleman, *Consciousness and Tradition*, New York, 1982). (In bold by us.)

In all of these and many other fields there is a deep thirst for a sacred science, a philosophy of nature and a total worldview which can give a new direction to the modern sciences themselves (p. 88).

As the Sufi poet Rumi has said, 'Do not seek water but seek thirst.' It is first necessary to understand and experience the need for a sacred science. Once the nature of the need is fully realized and the nonauthentic substitutes for such a science are seen to be what they really are, a veritable sacred science derived from the Supreme Science and yet concerned with the domain of manifestation, both microcosmic and macrocosmic, cannot but be reformulated and reconstituted (p. 175).



# Spiritual Life for the Modern Age

SWAMI BHUTESHANANDA

*The following article is based on a talk given in Newcastle, Australia, in May 1986 by Revered Swami Bhuteshanandaji, in which he spoke of 'the discontent that is simmering everywhere. In spite of the plenty, we are suffering from a kind of acute poverty.' In the course of his talk, he pointed out that there is a religion—non-dogmatic, perfectly rational and scientific, yet profound—that can help modern man to deal with this problem. It is the religion founded on the eternal principles of Vedānta, with its doctrine of Universal Oneness. We are all manifestations of that Divine Oneness, he said in his concluding remarks.*

*Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji is the President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.*

Spiritual life is the eternal quest of man. But because of industrialization, ways of life taught by our ancestors ages ago may not suit us fully. Times have changed very much and we are living in a world in which, if our ancestors visited us, they would find themselves as strangers. In those ancient times people had ample time at their disposal and their social structure was not so complicated as ours is now. People's way of thinking has also undergone tremendous change, so that we have to try to discover new ways in which the eternal quest for spiritual life can be carried on in this age.

That we need something to help us adjust to the inner urge we are all feeling goes without saying. The need is there. We are not fully satisfied with the way that we are living. We feel that something is lacking, in spite of the amenities that we have, at least in the affluent areas. We are just fumbling about, grasping for something that will satisfy us. In spite of all this growth of civilization, or progress of science, we find ourselves in a not very happy position.

You can see the discontent that is simmering everywhere. In spite of the plenty, we are suffering from a kind of acute pover-

ty, we feel that we are lacking something which is important, and yet we do not know where to find it. A modern man, particularly a man who is pulled by different forces, finds it difficult to lead his life in a balanced manner. Demands of society are such that hardly any time is left for making our inner adjustment so that we can be at peace with ourselves and with our surroundings.

Science has given us many things which are desirable; it has given us enormous power. But, though this power is a source of great strength, it is also a source of great weakness, because we do not know how to make use of it. It may prove to be for the good of mankind, or it may be for the worst disaster that mankind can think of. We do not know how we are to avoid that catastrophe and make ourselves happier, more peaceful, more integrated, more satisfied. That is the position in which modern man finds himself. This is the position we have come to.

Why are we feeling this way? For one thing we are too much occupied with things material, so that not only do we have plenty of comforts, we are craving for even more. And this has created a great discontent



among the people because of their differing standards of living. Some are in acute poverty; some have too much and do not know what to do with what they have. That creates discord between one nation and another, between one society and another, between a man and his neighbours.

Unequal distribution of wealth, unequal distribution of power, create a sense of unrest we don't know how to get rid of. The more we try to solve the problem through negotiations, through various efforts in a collective way, the more we feel that the solution is always eluding our grasp. We need not dwell at length on the subject because it is obvious to thinking people everywhere.

A sort of fear psychosis is causing great unrest in our minds, but that is only one part of it. Deep within, in our innermost self, we

have an idea that, 'I am somebody who was born on such and such a date, who has passed through childhood, through youth, have reached old age, and so on.'

But if we analyse our personality, it will be seen to be a conglomeration of various things which do not go together. As for instance: our body—it is a product of matter. We can also think of the senses, but we do not know what they are made of, nor do we know what the mind is made of. Still we know they are not material in the sense in which we understand the body to be, or the physical objects that we see around us. That much we have understood; we have come to some understanding of the relation between the material objects and the perceiver of the material objects. I am the perceiver of the things that I experience around me. That is the relation that everyone has taken for granted, without really analysing the dif-

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feel we are not integrated personalities. We feel we are pulled by different forces and do not find any kind of harmony among them. Pulled in different directions, we are split into multiple fragments, and do not know who we really are. This is our condition in our present-day civilized life.

### *The Crux of the Problem*

This is the crux of the problem—we do not know who we really are. Man's experience is limited to the changes of the body, the ideas that crop up in the mind, the experiences that are gathered through the senses. Beyond that we do not know what we ourselves are. Very rarely do we have the ability or leisure to analyse ourselves and find out what we actually are. We simply

ference, or without trying to find out what that perceiver consists of, and what is the real object of his perception. We have taken it for granted, and so our sense of duality persists.

We have analysed ourselves to this extent, and we have also made tremendous progress in science. But in spite of all this—our inward analysis and our outward scientific achievements—we are not at peace with ourselves or with one another. Peace is the thing that we are lacking and the thing that is of utmost importance for us—peace within, and peace without, and peace among ourselves.

Now, because of our changed ways of



thought, we cannot resort to religion as our forefathers understood it. There was much that was crude, extremely naive, that was (to us) a bundle of superstitions. This kind of religion does not appeal to us today. We feel that if we had to accept such a religion, we would have to go back a thousand years, which is not possible. We have gone far away from that stage and we need something that will satisfy us in the present age. Let us see whether religion, or spirituality, can help us out of this crisis—crisis individual as well as collective. That is of utmost importance to us. It is not a problem which we can take lightly, the solution to which we can find at some period when we have nothing else to do, just for the sake of passing our spare time. No, it is of *utmost* importance. It is vitally important for us to find a solution, without which we are not likely to be happy, well-integrated individuals, or part of an integrated society. We need something that our ancestors found in religion—something that can be helpful to us now.

As we have said, we cannot accept religion as it was understood in past ages. We cannot go back to the worship of stocks and stones, to the worship of spirits or 'ghosts', to the worship of the various powers of nature, to the worship of magicians. Formerly magicians were the people who drew admiration and respect and reverence. Things have changed very much. Now we do not like to accept anything that we cannot understand through our reason. We want everything to be tested, to be understood, and then only to be followed. Without that it is simply a sort of self-hypnotism to imagine that the ancient practices can give us relief from modern troubles. We have to find out what, at the present level of mankind's progress, will actually help us to get out of our difficulties.

As I have often suggested, we have

control over the forces of nature, but we have lost control over ourselves. We have some understanding of matter, but not of the Spirit, whatever that may be. (We do not understand that even now.) But we understand that we are human beings; we have got on one side the body, the mind, and the senses; and on the other side there is something or someone which permeates these and also transcends them. We cannot be reduced to certain natural elements. That the human being is derived of carbon, nitrogen, and hydrogen—we cannot be reduced to that. We are something more than that. And understanding that something which is beyond the material aspect of ourselves is absolutely essential if we are to have integrated personalities. This integration of personality is possible only when we are able to rise above the material constituents, and can think of ourselves as something beyond the body-mind complex—something that persists through all the changes that the material aspect of ourselves undergoes.

The process of changes we mentioned is very simple—that I had once a child's body; then I had the body of a young man, then the body of an old man, and then someday, finally, this body will disintegrate. We do not know what will remain after that. But merely understanding the constituents will not give us the understanding of our true Self. It can give us some idea of the body, the constituents of the body, and some relation of the mind to the body, even though this relation is uncertain. Still, whatever it be, we feel more like a thinking being than merely a robot-like something that works without a mind.

#### *The Need for a Spiritual Approach*

Religious and spiritual teachers have always insisted on the spiritual aspect of man, and that it is to be distinguished from the material aspect. We are a Spirit which is



distinguished from all the material constituents which we are using—the body, mind, etc. Religion tells us of our true Self: ‘I am the master of the body; I am not the body or mind, because the body and mind have undergone changes beyond recognition, and still “I” persists.’ What is that ‘I’? We may not know, but today’s spiritual teaching will show us how to find out what that ‘I’ is. That is the quest of the modern spiritual life. It is not a mere intellectual speculation.

Intellectual speculation may give us some ideas, but we cannot live up to those ideas. They remain mere speculations, and not part of ourselves. That is what makes the difference between experimentation with a scientific instrument and experimentation with our mind which is beyond that. Spirituality offers a way of thinking which can make us different from what we are at present. Vedanta particularly, can teach you that *you* are one thing which is eternally unchanging, and because of Its existence you can see the changes everywhere. Something must be there unchanging, with relation to which changes take place. All the changes that we notice must be seen by something which itself does not change. It is that Self, Itself which is my abiding unchanging Reality. That can be understood only through deep thinking, through meditation.

Spiritual life means that constant awareness of the Spirit that is always free from the influence of matter, always free from the changes that take place in the mind and the body. We know that ‘I am that Spirit’, the eternal Perceiver, the eternal Onlooker. Everything else is the drama that is going on before It. When we discover that non-changing, eternal Principle in us, it becomes the sheet-anchor for the sort of balance that we need in these days of complete imbalance. Imbalance was there, everywhere, and we did not know where to

just cast our anchor so that we could be saved from the turmoil. We are now prepared to apply the knowledge that ‘I am the Spirit’ to our everyday life.

As long as we felt that we were the body and mind, we were always afraid that ‘somebody will do harm to me’, that ‘some group of people is against our group’, or ‘some nation is against our nation’. Always that fear was there. Vedanta has taught us that one Spirit pervades everywhere; knowing it we have found real peace. Because we know the Spirit, we do not find any difference between Spirit and Spirit. Shorn of all these material appendages, the Spirit is one only; there is no distinction in essence between different individuals. It seems

*When we say, ‘The world is a dream’, don’t take it literally. Let us not call it a dream; let us call it a changing phenomenon.*

absurd to say that ‘we have all become one’. And it is true, we are not all ‘one’—if we include our bodies and minds. On that level we are very different. Yet, one Divine Spirit pervades all beings. In that sense we are all One.

Gradually we have come to realize that the unchanging Reality can never be absent from us. Our very being consists of that unchanging Reality. ‘It is I who see the changes, and therefore I am not a part of these changes. I am the eternal Observer.’ That great truth was discovered by Vedantic *r̥ṣis*, the sages of India. Or, we can say more correctly that the Eternal Knowledge was always there. It dawned in the minds of some of the sages, and they expressed this idea: That one eternal Knowledge, eternal Existence, eternal Bliss—*That alone is*. Everything else is only a dream or an ‘appearance of changes’.



When we say, 'The world is a dream', don't take it literally. Let us not call it a dream; let us call it a changing phenomenon. Even in advanced scientific studies there is now the idea that the world is in a constant state of flux. In a constant state of flux things are never stable. From the scientific point of view, is there anything that can be called stable? As the whole world is moving, similarly, every atom making up the world is moving. Go to the finer and finer elements—there also we find constant flux, constant movement. In this constant flux, without something stable, something constant, you cannot think of change at all. If everything is changing, then how can I

that this 'I' is everywhere. As Spirit, 'I' am everywhere. It is 'I' who am manifesting as different individuals.

It is said in the *Gītā* that when I hurt anybody, I am hurting myself. And if anybody is hurting me, he is hurting himself. We are one, all-pervading Individual. Differences are caused by our giving wrappings to that Individual, giving wrappings to the Spirit, and thinking It to be divided. In Sanskrit texts, the illustration is given of the 'pot' and the 'sky' (sky, meaning *ākāśa* or space): A pot has space inside it; that is 'space related to the pot'. But then, outside also, the same 'space' is present. So there is

*Differentiated beings are actually different manifestations of that one Principle, that universal Oneness. Our awareness of that Supreme Truth will be the ultimate solution to all our problems. May that day come nearer day by day.*

know the change—unless I am an abiding principle which is not undergoing change? That is the discovery of Vedanta.

#### *A Religion for Modern Man*

'Discovery of Vedanta', I say, because it is not something new, but something that simply had to be *discovered, experienced*. We also have to experience this. Then only we can understand how we can apply this knowledge to our everyday life. Vedanta does not mean that we are zero—reduced to zero. No, Vedanta says, as spirit you are all-pervading. Even a particle of matter exists because of the Spirit that is its inherent Reality, the unchanging Substance on which all the changes are taking place. That 'sheet-anchor' we spoke of earlier is the Spirit. Modern religion should teach us about our own essence as Spirit. That is what is required of modern religion or modern spiritual teaching. If we can become aware of that inner spiritual essence, then our relation with the whole world will undergo tremendous change, because we shall see

no real limitation of the 'space'. The limitation is only for our understanding. We understand: 'the pot is limited, therefore the space within it is limited.' In the same way, when we think of ourselves to be limited by the body-mind complex, it is only then that the individual *appear* to be different from each other. But suppose we put emphasis on the other aspect, the Spirit, then there will be no difference at all. 'I am everywhere,'—that is the declaration of Vedanta.

*Sarvataḥ pāṇi-pādaṁ tat  
sarvato'kṣi-śiro-mukham;  
Sarvataḥśrutimal-loke  
sarvam-āvṛtya tiṣṭhati.*

(*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, III.16)

'His feet are everywhere, His hands are everywhere, His ears are everywhere; He is covering everything, permeating everything.'

God is everywhere, the indwelling



Spirit in us: *Īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānāṃ hrddēṣe, rjuna tiṣṭhati...* (*Gītā*, 18.61). 'He (*Īśvara*) is dwelling in the heart of every being.'

That *Īśvara* is none other than my Self. Gradually, as we free ourselves from the gross material objects and our relation with them, we see those so-called gross material things as nothing but expressions of that *Īśvara* or one Ultimate Reality. The world completely changes for us. There is no material world as we understood it; no individual beings as we understood them, but there is one all-pervading Personality, One all-pervading Reality. Let us all then behave in a manner that will be conducive to the attainment of that state of unified consciousness. That state comes to us through any religion, through any way that we choose.

The more we are able to think dispassionately, the more we are able to control our mind, control our selfish nature, and eliminate our egoistical tendencies. In this way we gradually become aware of our union with the Supreme Being, and attain true peace. That is the ultimate goal in life.

Let us always feel: 'My being is everywhere; I am everywhere. Brahman, that all-pervading Principle, is pervading the universe; He is pervading *me*. He is in the heart of all beings. He is the essence through

which everything is finding manifestation.'

The more we advance in this way the more chastened we become. And collectively speaking, it is not absurd to think that this idea can be made practical in the whole world—if not today, tomorrow; or at some future time, we do not know when. But let us all try to at least experiment with this path. Let us try to progress towards the goal; let us feel that we ourselves are Spirit, and let us *share* this Knowledge with others. That sort of sharing with others will enhance our spiritual life and hasten the day when we shall have a better world.

I do not know when that golden age will come, but Swami Vivekananda dreamed that the Age would come when we will all be approaching that Ultimate Reality which is within all of us. The Upaniṣad says: *Sa yathā sarvāsāmapāṇi samudra ekāyanam...* (*Br. Up.*, 4.5.12) 'Just as the ocean is the only goal for all waters....' From everywhere waters come and merge in that one ocean. We too are all like little streams, and we are to ultimately merge in that Ocean of Spirituality which is the essence in us as well as outside us. Differentiated beings are actually different manifestations of that one Principle, that universal Oneness. Our awareness of that Supreme Truth will be the ultimate solution to all our problems. May that day come nearer day by day. □

Just as you practise much in order to sing, dance, and play on instruments, so one should practise the art of fixing the mind on God. One should practise regularly such disciplines as worship, japa, and meditation.

—Sri Ramakrishna

# Living Vedanta

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

*Because India has treasured the immortal message of the Upaniṣads for so long, she has become immortal. But according to Swami Vivekananda, only preserving the message is not enough. The teachings must be well studied until we understand their spirit, and, most of all, they should be applied in our day-to-day life. The following article is from a talk given by Swami Ranganthanandaji, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission at Belur Math on 7 March 1995.*

## Introduction

Swami Vivekananda once said, 'I preach nothing but the Upaniṣads.' All his lectures were based on the Upaniṣads. These Upaniṣads have been with us for thousands of years, but we never utilized them to build our society or to shape our lives. When Swamiji came, however, he told us that these great Upaniṣads are there to help us live our lives and build a healthy society. That is why he preached only the Upaniṣads.

In the Ramakrishna tradition we put much stress on the Upaniṣads and try to show their practical application to society. Society must learn how to live the teachings of the Upaniṣads. Swamiji also said that the practical aspect of the teachings of the Upaniṣads are presented in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. In fact, it is the best commentary on the Upaniṣads. But in order to understand these two—the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā*—we need to study the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature. If you go directly to the Upaniṣads, you may not be able to catch the spirit of them. Swamiji's *Jnana Yoga*, or his *Lectures from Colombo to Almora*, and others, contain the very spirit of the Upaniṣads. So, after studying these books, if you then open the pages of the Upaniṣads, things become more simple and easy to understand. We often say the Upaniṣads are difficult to understand. They are difficult only because we

have not prepared our minds for them. That preparation comes by studying the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature. This literature is in a modern idiom, and we are familiar with modern ideas. When you discover that the Upaniṣads are equally modern, then you will see the close kinship between Sri Ramakrishna's and Swamiji's teachings and the Upaniṣads.

## The Central Teaching of the Upaniṣads

The central teaching of the Upaniṣads, as Swamiji repeatedly said, is that this human being is divine. In the Parliament of Religions this was his main theme. And thereafter in all his lectures in the West, as Romain Rolland pointed out in his *Life of Vivekananda*, Swamiji made it his main theme. Again and again he declared: 'Each soul is potentially divine.' And his practical teaching was: 'We must manifest this divinity within'—in our life, in our work, and in our human relations. This is also stated in the second chapter of the *Gītā*. If in the midst of our work, in the midst of our human relations, we can manifest our divine nature even a little, it can bring about a great change in ourselves. It will help us develop a healthy character. We should begin with a little manifestation, and then increase it a little more. But even the slightest increase of divine manifestation in us will change our character. Our relationships with other people will then be happier and more peace-



ful. The *Gītā* also assures us: '*Svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt*. Even a little of this dharma can save us from great fear.'<sup>1</sup>

This idea of the manifestation of the divinity within is a great teaching. This divinity is in all people. There is no distinction between a Hindu, a Muslim, or a Christian, a man or a woman—none at all. In everyone there is this divine spark. The Upaniṣadic sages actually saw it and declared: '*Vedāhametaṁ puruṣaṁ mahāntaṁ*: I have realized the infinite man behind this finite man.'<sup>2</sup>

Normally we are conditioned by our bodies. Hence, we are small. But within this small man is the infinite, and this infinite has to be realized. Therefore our whole life has to be centred in this question: Have I manifested the Atman within me, even a little? Then only will compassion, a spirit of service, love, and other such qualities come. Hatred, quarrelling, fighting—none of these will come then. Where do these things come from? They come from this little ego, which is controlled by the body system.

#### *The Ego vs. the Atman*

In every one of us there is this 'I'-centre, the ego, which in ordinary people is controlled by the senses and the body. This is why we become selfish and do not care for others. We feel we are separate from each other. All evils of society come from that attitude. Now when Vedanta comes in, we begin to realize that this ego, in reality, is infinite in dimension. It is only our body-consciousness that makes it small. But when we detach ourselves from the body, then the Self, the Atman, shines in its true infinite glory. It is the same Atman in every being, but that knowledge comes only when we become detached from the body. That is the condi-

tion—only when *dehābhimānitā galite*, when the thought of the body goes away, do we realize the Self. Begin with a little bit of detachment and go on increasing it until you realize your infinite nature. Then that sense of separation between yourself and other human beings will go away.

Separateness is condemned in Vedanta. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is said, '*Maitrayā abhinna cakṣuṣā*, with benevolence consisting in samesightedness'. Benevolence is in not seeing difference. This *abhinna cakṣu*, this sense of non-separateness, is Vedanta. We are not separate. We are all one. The same Atman is in you, in me, in all of us. The Atman is not many. If you see many, it is because of the body, which controls us. But in reality the Atman cannot be many. This is very much appreciated by some of the Western scientists. Schrödinger, the great nuclear scientist, said, 'Consciousness has no plural.' When you become detached from the body you realize the unity of the Atman.

This is the profoundest truth of the Upaniṣad. In no other literature in the world will you find such an in-depth study of human beings. The Upaniṣadic seers saw the infinite Atman, *mahāntaṁ puruṣaṁ*, in the depth of human beings. Having seen this, they said, 'Try to live that consciousness in your life.' The Atman-consciousness, the idea 'I am one with you,' should be developed. We do it by practising *abhinna cakṣu*, not seeing difference. This *abhinna cakṣu* is, in fact, a great teaching, but we never practised it in India. Our teachings are based on *abhinna cakṣu*, but no other nation has practised *bhinna cakṣu*, seeing difference, more than we in India. Everything is *bhinna*, different. I and you, the zemindars and the common people, the castes and the untouchables, men and women—all these differences have been created by us. That is why Swamiji wanted the Upaniṣads to be taught.

1. II.40.

2. *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad*, III.8.

Our new India should be free from this kind of divisiveness. Only then will freedom, unity and equality come.

The seers of the Upaniṣads discovered the truth that the one Atman is in the hearts of all. This is repeated in many, many places in the Upaniṣads. When you say the Atman is Brahman, it means that this very Atman is in you, in me, in all. It is one, and that one is the infinite Brahman, out of which the whole universe has come. 'Ayaṁātmā brahma, this Atman in you is Brahman'<sup>3</sup>—this is the great *mahāvākya*, the great saying. This Atman is Brahman, only we do not know it. Why? Because we are attached to the body. The body makes it limited, and the result is conflict. Wherever there is duality or many, there is the possibility of conflict. Wherever

being of all and is free from strife and contradiction.

As there is no *sparsa*, no second thing to touch, it is called *asparśa yoga*. In no other book will you find this. The word *advaita*, non-dualism, is in other texts, but the term *asparśa yoga* is found only in the *Māṇḍūkya-Kārikā*. What is the speciality of this yoga? *Sarvasattvasukhaḥ hitaḥ*—it is for the happiness and welfare of all beings. It is not just for one group of people, but for all. And it is *avivādaḥ*, free from disputations, and *aviruddhaḥ*, free from contradiction. When there are not two, when there is only one, where is there any contradiction? There will be contradiction only when there is more than one. That is why it says, 'I salute this great philosophy which speaks of *asparśa yoga*, the

*Our teachings are based on abhinna cakṣu, but no other nation has practised bhinna cakṣu, seeing difference, more than we in India. Everything is bhinna, different. I and you, the zemindars and the common people, the castes and the untouchables, men and women—all these differences have been created by us. That is why Swamiji wanted the Upaniṣads to be taught.*

there is unity, there will be no conflict at all. Vedānta is the philosophy of harmony and peace, not of conflict.

#### *Asparśa-Yoga*

In Gauḍapāda's *Kārikā* on the *Māṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad*, IV.2, you will find a wonderful verse:

*Asparśayogo vai nāma  
sarvasattvasukho hitaḥ;  
Avivādo'viruddhaśca  
deśitatstaṁ namāmyaham.*

I salute the yoga known as *asparśa* [i.e., free from all touch, free from duality], which is taught by the scriptures. This yoga promotes the happiness and well-

yoga of perfect non-duality, which has this quality of peace and harmony.'

Swamiji has presented this teaching to us in a very practical form so that we can put it into practice. Both in his *Jnana Yoga* lectures and his *Lectures from Colombo to Almora* you find him saying that it is this body-consciousness that makes us separate from each other. He also presented to us in those lectures this wonderful Vedantic vision of unity behind the multiplicity: 'I am That. I am That.' This is exactly what Śvetaketu was told by his father, Uddālaka, in the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*: 'Tattvamasi, tattvamasi, You are That, You are That.'<sup>4</sup> You are not this physically conditioned, limited being. That is not your true nature. But you are

3. *Māṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad*, 2.

4. VI.8.7.



That, the infinite Atman, What a beautiful expression!

### *The Uniqueness of Swamiji*

Before Swamiji came, pandits used to teach all these things, but they did not know their import, their significance. Most of the Upaniṣadic verses sounded very ordinary when explained by the pandits. Take for example: '*Uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varān nibodhata*.'<sup>5</sup> How many times in the last thousand years pandits have taught this! But no one understood its significance until Swamiji put it in his own free style: 'Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached.'

Swamiji also stressed the Upaniṣadic idea of fearlessness. God is fearless, and those who realize God become fearless. In other religions you find fear of God, or fear of this or that. But in the Upaniṣads there is no place for fear. The Atman is beyond all distinctions. Whom shall we fear when we are all one?

I mentioned previously about the body making the Atman seem to be many. It divides the Atman in me from the Atman in you and from the Atman in all. But Vedanta says that the body cannot divide the Atman. It seems to have divided it and made it into many, but in reality the Atman is not divided at all. This is what we have to realize. Our body-consciousness must become less and less. In *tyāga*, renunciation, or in *sannyāsa*, monastic life, body-consciousness is the first thing that must go. Then only can you realize your spiritual nature.

The same thing is meant when we say the *paśu bhāva*, the animal nature, must go. Then only can you become a human being. You may be surprised to learn that Sir Julian Huxley, a noted biologist who died just two years ago, also says this in his book. He says,

'Until the mammal in us dies, the man in us cannot grow.' The mammal in us must die. What is a mammal? A mammal is an animal that is at the stage of evolution where it feeds its children with milk. They have mammary glands. Human beings belong to the mammal class, and also cows and buffaloes. We have many animal tendencies within us, but they must go. Then only can we attain our true human nature.

We should not limit our consciousness within the body. We are not the body. The body is only a house in which we live, and one day we must leave it behind. Then consciousness alone remains. 'The one remains, the many change and pass', says Shelly, the nineteenth century British poet, who was influenced by Vedanta. That one is the Atman, the infinite Self. He is within every one of us. There is only one, not two—*ekameva advitīyam*. Consciousness has no second. When consciousness is seen to be limited within bodies there is plurality, but consciousness as such has no plurality. This is the great Vedantic teaching.

Modern science is coming closer to this idea, that the body cannot divide the Atman. As long as you are confined to this idea of the body, your consciousness will be limited. 'I', 'I'—this will come all the time. There will be no place for 'you'. You and I together is 'we', but this 'we' will not come until detachment from the body comes. Be free from the body idea. What happens then? You expand. *Ātma-avikāśa*, manifestation of the Atman, comes. Your infinite nature slowly begins to manifest. Those who are always concerned about their own body and are never concerned about other peoples' bodies will naturally be a nuisance to themselves and to others.

But how do we forget the body and go beyond bodily limitations? Through service, service to other people. By serving

5. *Kāṭha-Upaniṣad*, I.iii.14.



others you forget that you are the body. You feel you are something higher than the body. You feel one with other people, and you then express your Atman nature. Swamiji put much stress on this concept of service, or *sevā dharma*. No one before had given such profound expression to this philosophy of service as Swamiji had.

Swamiji has thus spoken of renunciation and service as the national ideals of India. Without renunciation, service is not possible. I must say 'no' to myself when I come to help you; otherwise I cannot help you. Saying 'no' to oneself is called renunciation. Only when you give up this body-controlled self will *vikāśa*, or expansion, come. Then your feeling for others will come, and this will find expression in your acts and modes of service. 'What can I do for you? How can I help you?'—this attitude will come automatically. This is how we try to realize the Atman. There is nothing magical or mysterious about realizing the Atman—not at all. We do it through our day-to-day living. We live for others, not for ourselves.

This body should not restrain us. The body is merely a place to live in, that's all. It is a house, not a prison. If you are only confined to the body, it becomes a prison. But if you 'live' in the body, you can go out to the neighbours' house, and then your body becomes a beautiful house. So you must keep this body only as a servant, and not as a master. Then will *Ātma-jñāna*, Self-knowledge, become more and more manifest. 'I am the Self; I am Pure Consciousness; I am one with all'—this idea will develop.

There is but one Atman in all of us. This is Śaṅkara's profound statement in his commentary on the *Brahma-Sūtras* (in the *Adhyāśa-Bhāṣya*). There he says: '*Ātmaikatva-vidyā pratipattaye sarve vedāntā ārabhante*—

The main purpose of all Vedantas [i.e., Upaniṣads] is to demonstrate this *ātma-ekatva*, this unity of the Atman in all.' There is only one Atman. Pure Consciousness is indivisible. With what can you divide consciousness? Just think about it. You cannot. It is like solar energy manifest all over the earth. Suppose you put a thousand pots of water outside. You will then find a thousand suns there. But if you break the pots, all the thousand suns will disappear, but the real sun will remain. In fact, it is always there. Similarly, when body-consciousness goes, you reduce multiplicity and stress unity. How to take us to that state is the purpose of Vedanta.

Every day, every minute, that awareness must come: 'I am not the body or the senses.' But if I am not this body, this mind, then what am I? Śaṅkara expresses it beautifully in his *Nirvāṇaśatakam*: '*Cidānanda-rūpaḥ śivo'ham śivo'ham*—I am Pure Consciousness and Bliss. I am Śiva. I am Śiva.' All troubles come from attachment to the body.

### *Practical Vedanta*

This idea of unity and harmony leading to service is absolutely essential. This is practical Vedanta, and this is what Kṛṣṇa taught in the *Gītā*. In the fifth chapter you find many beautiful ideas about equality and unity—*samatva*, or *samadarśitva*. Until now, most people only read the Smṛtis and the Purāṇas. In the Purāṇas there are some beautiful passages of pure devotion, but most of it is mythology and legends. But when you come to the *Gītā* and the Upaniṣads, you have pure Vedanta—human unity, harmony, oneness, and so on. For example, the sixth verse of the *Īśa-Upaniṣad* says, 'He who sees the Atman in every being and every being in the Atman will not hate anyone.' We are all one—this attitude must come. And now we have to give this teaching to the whole world. Physi-



cally the world is getting united, but mentally and spiritually it is not.

Only Vedanta can bring this unity. There is no other philosophy today that can give a soul to the global body of humanity. That is why Swamiji came at this time, when a new age has begun. He brought us Vedanta and left it to us to spread it. But we have to do it more by our lives than by teachings. Both are needed, but the life is more important. 'I must live Vedanta in my life'—that is the idea. Renunciation means giving up all that is unreal. And this body is something unreal. It is only a passing thing. Millions of cells in it are dying every minute. It is not our true Self. Within this body is the infinite Atman, and I am That. This is the kind of awareness we have to develop. This is what Sri Ramakrishna came for. He experimented with all aspects of religion including this great Advaita Vedanta. Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother have shown this oneness with all: we are not separate. You may be a Christian or a Muslim—it doesn't matter. We are all one. They are the examples to inspire us.

### *How to Study the Scriptures*

Whenever we study a text, we should try to assimilate the meaning of that text and develop our character further. The spirit of renunciation and the spirit of service must develop in us from this study, and then only will Vedanta live in us. That is what the country needs today. Our behaviour should always be directed towards harmony, peace, and goodness. On the basis of Advaita alone can you have love, sympathy, and harmony throughout society. This is the theme of Swamiji's famous lecture on Vedanta given in Lahore in 1897. Only when you read these lectures five or ten times can you catch their spirit. Reading them once you understand only a little. But if, after reading Swamiji's lectures several times, you read the Upanisads, you will find all this

there.

What beautiful expressions Śaṅkara uses in his commentaries. He begins his commentary on the *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad* thus: 'Om namo bhagavate vaivasvatāya mṛtyave brahmavidyācāryāya naciketase ca—To Yama, who is Brahmanvidyācārya [the teacher of the knowledge of Brahman], and also to Naciketā, salutations.' Then in the third chapter he gives a wonderful explanation of the word *gatiḥ*. It is said in the *Gītā*: 'Yad gatvā na nivartante taddhāma paramam mama: That is My supreme Abode, reaching which they do not return.'<sup>6</sup> There is an objection here: Whenever you go to a place, you can also return. So why does Śrī Kṛṣṇa say there is no return? Śaṅkara explains this in his commentary on the *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad* verse I.iii.11. He says: 'Avagatireva gatiriti upacaryate.' The word *gatiḥ* does not mean 'going'. It means 'avagatiḥ, understanding'. Understand your infinite nature. There is no 'going towards' the Atman. How can you go to the Atman? He is here, there, everywhere. The word *gatiḥ* is only an *upacāra*, a usage. Actually it means understanding, or realization, of your true Self. Śaṅkara gives such a beautiful commentary in fine, simple Sanskrit. You can understand the beauty of it when you are grounded in Swamiji's lectures. Then only can you enter into this immortal literature.

The Upaniṣads are immortal because they deal with the immortal. And India is immortal because the Upaniṣads are there. If the Upaniṣads had not been there, India would have died long ago. Swamiji came at the crucial moment when, after centuries of slavery, we were at the point of being destroyed by modern culture. Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and Swamiji have given us a new life—another thousand years of vigorous life. Today India is young, full

6. XV.6.



of strength, full of new ideas.

Though the Upaniṣads are immortal, they must be passed on. Previously only a few people were the custodians of this knowledge, and they did not share it with others. That was the situation until recently. Today it must be scattered everywhere. This wonderful message of Vedanta must not only go to all parts of India, but also to all parts of the world, where people are hungry for it.

### *The Necessity of Values*

People are now beginning to discuss how to restore values in society. You see corruption everywhere—in education, in politics, in administration. This value erosion has to be stopped. But where do values come from? A scientist will say that

They do many wicked things, because they only think of themselves. They do not think of the nation or the society. Even a petty clerk in a village will not pay the money due to a villager, though sanctioned by the government, until he is paid ten rupees as a bribe. Everywhere throughout the country people have become so low.

Everyone says that we should teach values, that values are needed. Biology also says this again and again. Sir Julian Huxley has discussed this in his book and has also raised many questions there. But if you ask people where we get values from, they have no answer. The only system that can show you the source of values is Vedanta. What is that source? It is the infinite Atman, which resides in the hearts of all. Suppose that young man who killed his wife had realized

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it does not come from nature, atoms, or molecules—not even from living entities called genes. So far as the body is concerned, it merely consists of a collection of genetic materials, and these genes are selfish. There is a book, *The Selfish Gene*, written by a British biologist. The idea in it is that if you think only of the body you will be utterly selfish, because the genes are selfish. Just consider the newspaper reports: A young man gets married and gets a good dowry. Then he burns his wife. Why? Because then he can get another dowry from another girl. Think of that person's mind. It is entirely controlled by the genetic system. He wants to have more and more, even by killing someone if necessary.

Or take for example today's politicians.

a bit of the Atman manifesting in the body. He would then have had respect for every individual, and such a tragic incident would not have happened.

Sri Ramakrishna told a story: Once a father brought two mangoes from the market and gave one to each of his two sons. The elder son was very clever. He quietly closed the door and ate the mango, and after washing his face, he came outside. But as soon as the second son got the mango, he remembered his friends outside. He went and shared the mango with them. Now here are two different actions and two different minds. The first is a genetically-controlled mind. The second is free from this control and is expansive. You can see this manifestation of the Atman there.



This simple story gives you an idea of what value-orientation in human life means. There is a place for others in my thinking: 'I am not alone'—this is the idea. Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda came to change our present situation. And we must become their instruments to help bring about this change. This must be the determination in each of us—to be an instrument of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda to bring this tremendous message of Vedanta to the people, to raise the nation into a nation of healthy individuals, loving and caring for each other.

Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and Swamiji showed us through their own lives how to bring about this change. Their lives and their teachings were both the same. They exemplified their teachings in their lives. For example, Sri Ramakrishna cleaned the latrine of the pariah who lived near the Dakshineswar Temple. He went there at night, because he would not be allowed to enter there if someone saw him. Why did he

do it? He said to the Divine Mother: 'O Mother, make me forget that I am a superior man, a brahmin. Make me the servant of all.' Never before has anyone done such a thing. All these great ideas are to be found in the lives of these people whom we consider to be our pathfinders.

So every day we must ask ourselves: 'Am I manifesting the Atman more and more in my life and in my behaviour?' If you ask yourself this question every day, there will be a tremendous improvement in your character, your energy, and your efficiency. Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji have taught us that if you live Vedanta, even fractionally, you will acquire a Vedantic character, Vedantic strength, Vedantic love and spirit of service. You may read all of Swamiji's works, but you must try to assimilate the teachings and make them part of your life. As Swamiji said: 'Religion is the manifestation of the divinity already in man.' The feeling must come: I must manifest the divine in my life. That is religion. □

Just as fire, though one, having entered the world, assumes separate forms in respect of different shapes, similarly, the Self inside all beings, though one, assumes a form in respect of each shape; and (yet) It is outside.

As air, though one, having entered into this world, assumes separate forms in respect of different shapes, similarly, the Self inside all beings, though one, assumes a form in respect of each shape; and (yet) It is outside.

Just as the sun, which is the eye of the whole world, is not tainted by the ocular and external defects, similarly, the Self, that is but one in all beings, is not tainted by the sorrows of the world, It being transcendental.

Eternal peace is for those—and not for others—who are discriminating and who realize in their hearts Him who—being one, the controller, and the inner Self of all—makes a single form multifarious.

Eternal peace is for those—and not for others—who are discriminating and who realize in their hearts Him who—being the eternal among the ephemeral, the consciousness among the conscious—alone dispenses the desired objects to many.

—Katha Upanishad, II,ii,9–13

# A Garden—My Mind

SUJATHA PADMANABHAN

A blooming garden my mind make,  
Where weeds are pulled  
And flowers bloom to life at Thy feet.  
Where endless thought-ripples  
Are tamed and calmed,  
And strength arises from gentleness  
And tranquillity born of *mauna*.\*

A blooming garden my mind make,  
With harnessed senses in right path.  
And faith, like an ever glowing lamp,  
Finds its eternal bonding with Thee.  
Where life no more, is wasted  
On selfish pleasures and worthless baubles.  
But like the full-blown lotus,  
Shares fragrance and nectar,  
With all thy children who come its way.



The young author is a college student from Madras, and has to her credit a published collection of poems, 'A Bouquet of Flowers'. This poem, she writes, is 'both a prayer as well as a reflection of my emotions on Divine Grace and human life.'

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\* Silence



# Vivekananda's Yoga Technology in a Multimedia Age

PRAVRAJIKA BRAHMAPRANA

*A painstakingly prepared and thoroughly researched paper on the effects of the multimedia—its promises and threats, and its boons and curses. Though the studies referred to cover the situation in the U.S.A., they are as true for other countries. For, human nature is universal and the media invasion global. By frequently referring to Swamiji's teachings on perception, concentration, knowledge and character, the author has given us an extremely valuable article on how best we and our children can utilize the multimedia facilities. She is a member of our Sarada Convent at Santa Barbara, California.*

The most remarkable feature about Leah was not that she was bright, young, and attractive, a student from St. John's College in Maryland, nor even that she was our convent's nun-for-a-month guest in the Vedanta Society's 1993 college retreatant programme. Nor was it her candid, quick-tongued, friendly demeanour, which I found so disarming. Leah's 'extraordinariness' was disquieting.

'Have you visited any of our centers on the East Coast?' I began our friendship barely an hour after Leah's arrival.

'Yes,' Leah replied.

'Have you ever attended any Sunday lectures?'

'One,' she affirmed.

'Do you have any impressions of what was said?'

Leah shrugged. 'No, not especially. I probably fell asleep.'

'Why?' I asked. 'Were you bored?'

'No.' Then came the bomb. 'I'm from the MTV generation,' Leah explained matter-of-factly. 'My parents didn't know what to do with me as a child, so they put me in front of the television—for eight hours at a time.' Leah continued, 'Consequently my attention span is only twenty minutes.'

'How do you get by in college?' I

gasped.

'I chose a college that teaches by discussion,' Leah replied with a note of reproach in her voice. After all, nowadays everyone *should* know how such a common problem is being handled.

'After twenty minutes of lecturing,' Leah explained, 'the professor breaks up the classroom into discussion groups. *That's* how we learn.'

I stared at this perfectly normal-looking young woman, bearing a handicap that a handful of educators and parents had foreseen when I was just a child in the 1950s and 60s. 'Television is harmful,' these so-called alarmists had warned. 'It's a "boob-tube"' that turns its viewers into zombies.'

At that time there were no scientific studies to verify such warnings, so they went largely unheeded. Then, beginning in the 1960s and 70s, when thousands of American women abandoned household drudgery and confinement for the economic freedom of the workplace or out of financial necessity, many double-income or single-parent families chose the television set as their children's cost-free baby-sitter.

Now, after almost two generations of multimedia exposure, we are witnessing the repercussions—curious shifts in behavioral

patterns in Leah's twenty-something generation and even more in today's teenagers. In southern California's public schools, *The Los Angeles Times* and *Santa Barbara News Press* report, students are demonstrating a noticeable lack of concentration and a growing disinterest in reading (the average American reads less than one book a year); many suffer from hyperactivity; and there has been a rise in violence on grade school campuses. These trends point to a nationwide decline in students' overall academic achievement. Where lies the problem? Recent studies suggest that one contributing factor is a little-known, deceptive dimension of our multimedia technology.

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grass-roots democracy and giving rise to political populism—politicians without platforms. This 'Brave New World' we have entered is dabbling with, perhaps even conditioning, our lives.

None of us is exempt from the electronic age. But the danger is that we may have become so ensconced in the comforts of its multimedia technology, that our sensibilities have become inured to its hazards. How can we begin to gauge the extent of its ingress into our psyche? What is its telltale imprint on the human mind and emotions? What are some of the positive effects of multimedia technology? How can we control its negative impact?

For the Vedantist, whose struggle Godward includes purifying the unconscious and re-conditioning the conscious mind, the answers to these questions are crucial to the survival of both the individual's and our nation's modern-day spiritual life.

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(electronic mail), video games, faxed messages, CDs (compact discs), or portable walkmans. And we have been touched, not only with its technology, but with its larger-than-life messages. If we have somehow escaped the lingo of TV ads, computer language, eager-to-offend rap artists or talk radio call-in hosts, we are undoubtedly daily mixing with people who have not. Televised town-hall meetings, electronic public opinion polls, and computerized mass mailings<sup>1</sup> are reshaping American

In 1893, when Swami Vivekananda first set foot on American soil, Western civilization was on the brink of a new technological era. It was an epoch heralded by culture-changing inventions and discoveries. Sir Robert Watt's radar, the Bell telephone, Nicholas Ottos's internal combustion engine, Karl Benz's automobile, the submarine, Thomas Edison's light bulb, phonograph and telegraph repeater, George Eastman's flexible roll film, and Nikola Tesla's polyphase alternating-current system, fluorescent lighting, and principles of radio and remote control<sup>2</sup> were just a few of

1. See 'Hyper Democracy,' *Time*, 23 January, 1995, pp. 15–21 and also 'Manhattan Project,' *Newsweek*, November–December 1992, pp. 40–56.

2. 'A Chronicle of Important Events in the Life and Times of Vivekananda (1863–1902),'



the inventions that shrank frontiers, diminished distances among people, and paved the way for Americans to live at heightened record-breaking speeds, communication and comfort as they lurched forward and then careened down what was to eventually become today's information superhighway.

For a Vivekananda, who saw divinity in any display of genius—whether spiritual or secular—the spectacular inventions exhibited at the Chicago Exposition's Palaces of Manufacturers, Mechanic Arts, and Electricity undoubtedly were inspiring. 'I love the Yankee land,' Swamiji wrote to Mary Hale. 'In America is the place, the people, the opportunity for everything.'<sup>3</sup> At another time he wrote:

In *America alone* there is that something in the air which brings out whatever is best in everyone.<sup>4</sup>

Vivekananda was commenting on Western science at its best—when American free enterprise first consummated its marriage with inventions that promised to move a civilization forward. So inspired was the Swami by this magic combination of industry and idealism that he prophesied a new order of humanity in the West. 'By combining some of the active and heroic elements of the West with calm virtues of the Hindus,' Swamiji forecast:

there will come a type of man far superior to any that have ever been in this

world.<sup>5</sup>

There was no greater friend of Western science than Vivekananda who, though raised in a technologically backward country, preached an ancient philosophy based on the modern experiential method. There is...always a small group of men who teach religion from experience,' Swamiji explained to his Western audience.

They are called mystics, and these mystics in every religion speak the same tongue and teach the same truth. This is the real science of religion.<sup>6</sup>

It was no accident that such a religion would begin to take root in America right before Vivekananda's eyes. The turn-of-the-century West was a historical landmark period when the Quantum Theory had just been discovered, followed shortly thereafter by the Special Theory of Relativity—a time when the credibility of an idea rested on reason or scientific proof. Swami Vivekananda and his mission were well matched for the occasion.

Vivekananda's brand of preaching appealed to a thinking class of Americans. Not only could the Swami's relentless logic bow the heads of diehard Western agnostics, materialists, and rationalists,<sup>7</sup> but his talks on Samkhya cosmology—ideas pertaining to the involution and evolution of the universe (of which the widely accepted Big Bang Theory is compatible), the interchangeability of matter and energy (Vivekananda's 'Electric Sphere' and Einstein's 'mass-energy'), and the subtle analysis of matter and mind—intrigued such luminaries as Nikola Tesla and William

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*Vivekananda: His Gospel of Man-making*, ed. Swami Jyotirmayananda (Madras, 1988), pp. 355–644.

3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 7 (Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1972), Mayavati memorial Edition, pp. 498–9. (Hereafter referred to as *The Complete Works*.)

4. *The Complete Works*, vol. 6, p. 363.

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5. Marie Louise Burke, *New Discoveries*, vol. 2, p. 362.

6. *The Complete Works*, vol. 6, p. 81.

7. Marie Louise Burke, *New Discoveries*, vol. 3, pp. 469–71.

James. That the ideals of science could bond with the science of Vedanta was demonstrated in their later writings.<sup>8</sup>

Although Swami Vivekananda entered a time in American history when technological advances meant unadulterated progress, the Swami's insight into Western society penetrated beneath its temporal success and elation. Everything has a price, Swamiji warned dollar-worshipping Americans, including progress. Progress can sophisticate a civilization and, at the same time, sacrifice the human spirit. 'I believe that the Hindoo faith has developed the spiritual in its devotees at the expense of the material,' Swamiji admitted before adding, 'and I think that in the Western world the contrary is true.'<sup>9</sup>

Such is the irony of progress that the faster a nation advances, the faster dissatisfaction and corruption course through its veins. 'The mainspring of the strength of every race lies in its spirituality,' the Swami declared,

and the death of that race begins the day that spirituality wanes and materialism gains ground.<sup>10</sup>

Vivekananda could have been talking to us today—the children of cyberspace—instead of our turn-of-the-century ancestors when he said in no uncertain terms:

Tremendous power is being acquired by the manufacture of machines and other appliances, and privilege is claimed today as it never has been claimed in the history of the world. That is why Vedanta wants to preach against it, to break down this tyrannizing over the souls of men.<sup>11</sup>

Does our multimedia technology run our lives and rule our souls? Or can material progress and spiritual values coexist? Vivekananda came out with a surprising verdict when he explained materialism's natural life cycle. 'Possessed of a plenitude of rajas, they [Westerners] have now reached the culmination of bhoga, or enjoyment,' the Swami declared before admonishing his own Hindu countrymen and -women:

Do you think it is not they but you who are going to achieve yoga—you who hang about for the sake of your bellies?<sup>12</sup>

A hundred years later, do we find that Swamiji's observations have borne true? Has Western affluence ignited a spiritual trend in society? Or has our ever-advancing technology developed within each successive generation ever-higher saturation levels?

It was 1946, less than fifty years after Swami Vivekananda's mahasamadhi, that marked the dawn of a media revolution. That was the year film attendance peaked. Ninety million Americans—half the nation's population—weekly flocked to movie theaters. And 1946 was also the year that 6,000 television sets entered American homes.

Within five years, a nationwide television craze had forced hundreds of America's movie theaters to close. Within another five years, television ownership had skyrocketed to two-thirds of America's households. By 1960, ninety percent of the nation's homes had TVs, and the average American watched five hours a day.<sup>13</sup>

Today, according to the A. C. Neilson Company, the average American household

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 434, 506–07.

9. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 362.

10. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 448.

11. *The Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. 425.

12. *The Complete Works*, vol. 6, p. 459.

13. 'Film in the Television Age,' Part VII of *American Cinema*, KCET, 20 February, 1995.



has a television on for nearly eight hours per day. The average child watches three and a half hours of TV per day, and the average adult watches between five and six hours per day.<sup>14</sup> Television has today become a daily, lifelong companion for millions of Americans.

Vivekananda, whose master, Sri Ramakrishna, often emphasized the value of holy company as a catalyst to spiritual progress, would have been one of the first to warn Americans for what these statistics reveal—a conspicuous counter-trend to spiritual self-culture. Given the role mental impressions, or *samskaras*, play in building one's inner life, what student of Yoga would *not* question the spiritual—let alone physical, emotional, or intellectual—repercussions of sitting long hours before a TV set, viewing programmes largely bereft of worthwhile content? By using the simile of a lake for the mind, Vivekananda illustrated the Yoga school's concept of *samskaras*. 'Every ripple, every wave that rises in the mind, when it subsides, does not die out

beneath the surface, subconsciously. What we are every moment is determined by the sum total of these impressions on the mind.<sup>15</sup>

Jerry Mander, an ex-advertising agent whose pioneer book, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, challenged the integrity of the television media, cited numerous studies that substantiate the Yoga school's insight into the character-shaping power of mental impressions. 'Focusing one's mind upon objects, either outside the body or inside it, affects one's entire physical nature,' Jerry Mander wrote.

The image becomes part of your image vocabulary. It remains in your mind. That is, it remains in the cells of your brain. It has physical character.<sup>16</sup>

How then, we may ask, can a spiritual seeker ignore the psycho-physical effects of a media that reputedly gears its programmes to the mentality of a twelve year old?<sup>17</sup>

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entirely,' he explained, 'but leaves a mark and a future possibility of that wave coming out again.' Swamiji then continued:

This mark, with the possibility of the wave reappearing, is what is called *samskara*. Every work that we do, every movement of the body, every thought that we think, leaves such an impression on the mind-stuff, and even when such impressions are not obvious on the surface, they are sufficiently strong to work

Will not a substantial daily dose of juvenile—or just plain idiotic—programmes necessarily work to trivialize the mind and arrest its higher aspirations?

Furthermore, television executives are now facing the protests of researchers, children's rights groups, and children themselves who claim that television is sending

15. *The Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. 233.

16. Jerry Mander, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* (New York: Morrow Quill Paperbacks: 1978), pp. 221, 222.

17. Neil Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood* (New York: Delecor Press, 1982), p. 118.

14. Jerry Mander, *In the Absence of the Sacred* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1991), p. 76.

today's youths mixed messages. In March 1995, the *Los Angeles Times* published a poll of 750 children commissioned by Children Now. The survey reported that most young people believe that 'television encourages them to take part in sexual activity too soon, to show disrespect for their parents, to lie and to engage in aggressive behavior.'<sup>18</sup> 'Kids love television,' said Richard Frank, chairman of Walt Disney Television and

ing, as it were, until it meets a fit object that will receive it,' Swamiji once explained to his Western students.

Any mind which is open to receive some of these impulses will take them immediately. So, when a man is doing evil actions, he has brought his mind to a certain state of tension and all the waves which correspond to that state of tension,

*Researchers also noted that aggressive responses to screen violence were further exacerbated by (1) improved special effects which give a more realistic depiction of violence; (2) viewer identification with aggressive media characters; (3) belief in the reality of the programmes; (4) violence in the homes; and (5) the lack of clear norms against aggression.*

Telecommunications and president of the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences. 'But what they see on it is, in a word, confusing.'<sup>19</sup>

How can we overlook the psycho-physical repercussions of television violence on the viewer? Statisticians tell us the shocking news that by eighteen years of age, an average American has witnessed 2,00,000 acts of TV violence.<sup>20</sup> It would have come as no surprise to Vivekananda when today's American Medical Association, National Institute of Mental Health, U.S. Surgeon General's Office, U.S. Centers for Disease Control, and the American Psychological Association report findings that demonstrate 'a direct causal link between screen violence and violent criminal behavior.'<sup>21</sup> 'Every thought projected from every brain goes on pulsat-

and which may be said to be already in the atmosphere, will struggle to enter into his mind. That is why an evil-doer generally goes on doing more and more evil.'<sup>22</sup>

Screen violence—in television and film—<sup>23</sup> not only has the capacity to incite violence in viewers possessing violent ten-

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Press: 1984) p. 125.

In this connection, in October 1987, Surgeon General Dr. C. Everett Koop also reported recent findings that explicit violent imagery in rock music is now known to have a harmful influence on children and adolescents—'one that can lead to suicide, satanism and alcohol abuse.' (Gilda Berger, *Violence and the Media* [New York: Franklin Watts, 1989], p. 131) Dr. Joseph Stuessy, professor of music at the University of Texas at San Antonio and author of *The Heavy Metal User's Manual*, addressed the powerful effects of the music media when he stated that 'all music affects moods, emotions, attitudes, and behavior.' (*Violence and the Media*, p. 131 [Italics are added]).

22. *The Complete Works*, vol. I, 82.

23. Joe Urschel, columnist for *USA Today*, recent-

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18. Claudia Puig, 'Children's TV Panel Tunes In to Parent Role,' *Los Angeles Times* (6 March, 1995), p. F11.

19. *Ibid.*, p. F11.

20. CBC News, Calgary, 27 November, 1994.

21. Patricia Marks Greenfield, *Mind and Media: The Effects of Television, Video Games, and Computers* (Cambridge: Harvard University



dencies, but it is also a potentially lethal conditioner for innocent viewers, such as children. A study that observed sixty-three children between the ages of four and nine years of age over a five-year period reported: 'Heavy television viewing during preschool years is particularly strongly related to aggression.'<sup>24</sup> Laboratory experiments have demonstrated:

After exposure to human acts of aggression in films or on television, children, adolescents, and young adults behave more aggressively in situations ranging from play to 'teaching' to dispute resolution. These effects are more pronounced when the media aggression is rewarded or when the subject is angered and the media aggression is justified.<sup>25</sup>

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which give a more realistic depiction of violence; (2) viewer identification with aggressive media characters; (3) belief in the reality of the programmes; (4) violence in the homes; and (5) the lack of clear norms against aggression.<sup>26</sup> Psychologists explain the significance of these variables in terms of the normal psychological process of memory function. 'Memories are stored on networks,' they report, 'and...the recall of one memory from the network facilitates recall of other memories on the same network (known as "priming").' What does this suggest?

That children who observe violence in the home might code violent media messages on different networks than children who live in nonviolent homes (for example, 'real-life' networks instead of 'fantasy' networks.) Real-life problems could then prime violent media messages for those children but not for others.<sup>27</sup>

ly criticized film critics for not taking moral responsibility for the anti-social movies they often praise, reviewing them instead as 'distinct and isolated pieces of art that have no effect or afterlife outside the theater.' 'Like contemporary tobacco chiefs who deny any link between cigarettes and cancer, Hollywood executives will be sitting before congressional committees 10 years from now in adamant denial,' Urschel accused. 'They will continue to callously brush off the connections between their products and the violence in society—despite an avalanche of scientific studies showing the connection.' (Jack Matthews, 'Can 200 Critics Be Wrong? [Maybe]', *Los Angeles Times* [Monday, 26 December, 1994, p. F14])

24. Linda Heath, PhD; Linda B. Bresolin, PhD; Robert C. Rinaldi, PhD, 'Effects of Media Violence on Children,' *A Review of the Literature: Arch Gen Psychiatry* (vol. 46, p. 377).

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 376–9.

Beyond the findings in social science laboratory research, where lies the medical evidence correlating media violence with aggressive behavior? In the neurological pathways that physically link human response to mental perception. 'It has been found that mental images have many of the same physical components as open-eyed perceptions,' Jerry Mander explained. 'Our bodies react to mental images in ways similar to how they react to images from the external world.' Mander then illustrated:

The American physiologist Edmund Jacobson has done studies which show that when a person imagines running, small but measurable amounts of contraction actually take place in the muscles associated with running. *The*

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 376–7.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 378.

*same neurological pathways are excited by imagined running as by actual running....*

'But anatomists have also been aware of pathways between the cerebral cortex,

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*Jerry Mander*

where images are stored, and the autonomic nervous system which controls the so-called involuntary muscles,' Mander continued.

The autonomic nervous system controls sweating, blood vessels, expansion and contraction, blood pressure, blushing and goose-pimpling, the rate and force of heart contractions, respiratory rate, dryness of mouth, bowel motility and smooth muscle tension. There are also pathways between the autonomic nervous system and the pituitary and adrenal cortex. The pituitary gland secretes hormones which regulate the rate of secretion of other glands; especially the thyroid, sex and adrenal glands. The adrenal gland secrete steroids, which regulate metabolic processes, and epinephrine, which causes the 'fight or flight' reaction. *Through these pathways, an image held in the mind can literally affect every cell in the body.*<sup>28</sup>

Mind-body interconnectedness has been known to Yoga psychologists long before Western doctors. Sri Ramakrishna

divulged the direct causal link when he explained to his followers that in the course of practicing spiritual disciplines a devotee acquires a 'love body' endowed with 'love eyes,' 'love ears,' etc. 'With this "love body",' Sri Ramakrishna disclosed, 'the soul communes with God.'<sup>29</sup>

So profound are the effects of perception on our being that Jerry Mander could have just as easily been describing the transformative effects of meditation on the Chosen Ideal as those of viewing screen violence when he summarized: 'Images carried within human beings have a definite evolutionary and biological role.'

Like light, of which they are constructed, images are concrete. Images are things....The image held in our mind produces physiological as well as psychological reactions. We slowly evolve into the images we carry, we become what we see....<sup>30</sup>

Although violence in TV drama is nowadays scrutinized for context and suitability, violence in cartoons and toy commercials is not. On the average, an hour-long cartoon shows twenty-five acts of violence, which largely occur without any media commentary of ethical or social consequences. Indiscriminate screen violence may account for the fact that during the late 1950s British adolescents who watched television were found to exhibit noticeably more anxiety about growing up in society than adolescents who did not.<sup>31</sup> Some

28. Jerry Mander, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, p. 226. (Italics added.)

29. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1973), p. 115.

30. Jerry Mander, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, p. 219.

31. Patricia Marks Greenfield, *Mind and Media: The Effects of Television, Video Games, and Computers* (Cambridge: Harvard University



media critics also suggest that random screen violence may partially be contributing to the otherwise inexplicable increase in hyperactivity amongst today's youngsters. 'While sitting quietly in front of the TV, the

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child sees people punching each other on the screen,' Jerry Mander explained in his most recent book, *In the Absence of the Sacred*.

There is the impulse to react—the fight-or-flight instinct is activated—but since it would be absurd to react to a television fight, the child suppresses the emotion. As the fighting continues, so does the cycle of impulse and suppression.

Mander concluded:

Throughout the television viewing experience, the child is drawn back and

forth on this see-saw of action and suppression, all the while appearing zapped and inactive. When the set goes off, this stored up energy burst forth in the disorganized, frantic behavior that we associate with hyperactivity. Often the only calming act is to again put the set on, which starts the cycle anew.<sup>32</sup>

Although we may concede that daily exposure to inane and violent television programmes is re-working the psychophysical make-up and nervous system of our Brave New World's younger generation—have we considered how television technology *itself* is affecting TV viewers? For example, some media critics suggest that hyperactivity is not solely the result of television violence, but also of TV's use of technical events.

Television is essentially a boring media, utilizing only sight and hearing. Therefore, in order to capture the attention of the audience, television producers attempt to create the illusion of the extraordinary. They do this technologically. *Sesame Street*, the most popular programme in television history—created and orchestrated by ex-advertising professionals—uses every technical event known to the advertising industry, including rapid cutting, interjection of songs and cartoons, and shortened time spans. 'Time-compression' is a media technique that removes minute intervals of 'redundant sound' in order to produce crisper, more persuasive—and more memorable—sound bytes.<sup>33</sup> What the child finds entertaining about *Sesame Street* is a technological juxtaposition of reality, partial reality and non-reality in a distorted, condensed, and accelerated time-frame. Is it any wonder

Press:1984), p. 5 In this connection, J. L. Singer and associates 'found evidence of this 'scary world' phenomenon among children, especially among those who view realistic adult-oriented crime dramas.' (See 'Family Patterns and Television Viewing as Predictors of Children's Beliefs and Aggression' [*J Commun* 1984, vol. 34, pp. 73–89] and 'Family Experiences and Television Viewing as Predictors of Children's Imagination, Restlessness, and Aggression' [*J Soc Iss* 1986, vol. 42, pp. 107–24].)

32. Jerry Mander, *In the Absence of the Sacred* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1991), p. 83.

33. Eric Clark, *The Want Makers* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1989), pp. 98, 99.

that hyperactivity may result among children?

'[Technical events] must surely also contribute to the decline of attention span and the inability to absorb information that comes muddling along at natural real-life speed,' Jerry Mander further posits.

To be constantly buffeted by bizarre and impossible imagery cannot help but produce stress in viewers. To have one's attention interrupted every ten seconds must jar mental processes that were otherwise attuned to natural, personal informational rhythms in which such interruptions would be literally maddening.<sup>34</sup>

Recent studies have verified Mander's supposition. One study which restricted six-year-olds' TV viewing time reported a corresponding increase in the children's intellectual reflection and a decrease in their impulsive behavior. Psychologists found other tests revealed similar results.<sup>35</sup>

Hyperactivity has concerned countless educators. Many of today's students are simply unable to maintain a normal attention span, teachers complain. They become quickly bored and demand constant change.

*With concentration, Swamiji concluded, comes 'the real genuine religion.' And without concentration?—a society's educational decline and spiritual void.*

Consequently educators are forced to *perform* rather than to teach<sup>36</sup>—a sobering predicament. 'To me the very essence of education is concentration of mind,' Vivek-

ananda asserted,

If I had to do my education over again, and had any voice in the matter,...I would develop the power of concentration and detachment, and then with a perfect instrument I could collect facts at will.<sup>37</sup>

Hyperactivity is a serious handicap for any civilization that values its youth as one of its most telling future resources. Hyperactivity precludes concentration, the bedrock of knowledge—both secular and spiritual. 'The powers of the mind are like rays of light dissipated,' Swami Vivekananda explained at one time, 'when they are concentrated, they illumine.'

This is our only means of knowledge. Everyone is using it, both in the external and the internal world; but, for the psychologist, the same minute observation has to be directed to the internal world, which the scientific man directs to the external; and this requires a great deal of practice.<sup>38</sup>

'How has all the knowledge of the world been gained but by the concentration of the

powers of the mind?' Vivekananda reminded his audience again and again.

The world is ready to give up its secrets if we only know how to knock, how to give it the necessary blow. The strength and force of the blow come through concentration. There is no limit to the power of the human mind. The more con-

34. Jerry Mander, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, p. 304.

35. Patricia Marks Greenfield, *Mind and Media: The Effects of Television, Video Games, and Computers*, pp. 91–2.

36. Jerry Mander, *In the Absence of the Sacred*, p. 86.

37. *The Complete Works*, vol. 6, pp. 38–9.

38. *The Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. 129.



centrated it is, the more power is brought to bear on one point; that is the secret.<sup>39</sup>

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And without concentration?—a society's educational decline and spiritual void.

Along with hyperactivity, television technology elicits from its viewer another, seemingly contradictory, trait—passivity. Scientists have found that by absorbing long hours of television, the viewer's brain easily slips into the alpha brain-wave pattern, a slow, non-cognitive mode that allows a stream of information to enter the mind without critical analysis. Australian National University researchers refer to this as 'sleep-teaching.'<sup>41</sup> Alpha waves disappear the moment a person actively seeks informa-

tion of meditation were tested—discursive Christian meditation, Buddhist vipassana meditation, or Vedanta's meditations on the Personal God or Impersonal Reality?

Swami Vivekananda described the triple-stage, heroic effort necessary to induce genuine meditation within the Vedanta tradition. 'If the mind can first concentrate upon an object,' the swami explained,

and then is able to continue in that concentration for a length of time, and then, by continued concentration, to dwell only on the internal part of the perception of which the object was the effect, everything comes under the control of such a mind.<sup>43</sup>

Meditation, in the true sense of the word, does not induce passivity nor does it come

*Indian seers have scientifically gauged the meditation process from start to finish. Twelve seconds of an uninterrupted flow of thought toward an object signifies concentration. Concentration that is held for two minutes and twenty-four seconds becomes meditation. And meditation lasting twenty-eight minutes and forty-eight seconds culminates in lower samadhi.*

tion rather than succumbing to it.

Western scientists have at times associated certain types of meditation with the alpha-wave pattern.<sup>42</sup> However, since Eastern meditation has only recently entered American spiritual life, those studies may be flawed. For example, did Western scientists test so-called 'meditators' who were adepts or beginners? What forms

easily, but it is attained after years of daily practice.

Indian seers have scientifically gauged

the skull. When the brain is inactive, the cortical cells discharge in unison, producing the 'alpha rhythm'.... When the brain is concentrating on some problem, the synchrony of discharge vanishes, as different groups of cells pursue their own purposes, and the more complex rhythms are detectable. In deep meditation even the ten to twelve per second alpha rhythm dies away, to be replaced by a slower four to six per second rhythm known as the theta rhythm.' (*The Natural History of the Mind* [New York: E. P. Dutton, 1979], p. 44)

43. *The Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. 186.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

41. Jerry Mander, *In the Absence of the Sacred*, p. 80.

42. However, Gordon Rattray Taylor, one of the best-known science writers in the English language, wrote: 'As each neurone [nerve cell of the brain] discharges its tiny pulse, the total effect is detectable as an electric field outside

the meditation process from start to finish. Twelve seconds of an uninterrupted flow of thought toward an object signifies concentration. Concentration that is held for two minutes and twenty-four seconds becomes meditation. And meditation lasting twenty-eight minutes and forty-eight seconds culminates in lower samadhi.<sup>44</sup>

Whether meditation—like television viewing—actually induces alpha waves has perhaps yet to be ascertained through a proper control group. However, even if it does, there is one critical difference between *attempted* meditation and television viewing: the former is an internally generated mental process, while the latter is externally dependent. Meditation is a discipline which develops concentration, whereas television viewing is a recreation that may suppress attention.<sup>45</sup>

There are several reasons why watching television brings on the passive-receptive alpha brain mode. One factor is that the small size of the TV screen requires very little eye movement to perceive the image projected. 'This lack of *seeking* images,' Jerry Mander informed his readers, 'disrupts the normal association between eye movement and thought stimulation, which is a genetically provided safety valve for human beings.' Mander continued:

Before modern times, any unusual event in the environment would attract instant attention; all the senses would immediately turn to it, including the vision sense and its 'feeler,' the eyes. But when an image doesn't have to be sought, an important form of mental stimulation is absent.<sup>46</sup>

A second factor contributing to the alpha brain wave mode is the flickering light of the TV screen—sixty times per second—which, coupled with a lack of eye movement, produces a situation similar to staring at a hypnotist's candle.

The third factor is television's non-stop image stream, which precludes the viewer from halting the process to critically analyze what he or she is perceiving. The viewer is forced to become a passive receiver in order to allow the images to enter the mind at their own speed.

In 1975 a research team headed by psychologists Merrelyn and Fred Emery at the Center for Continuing Education at the Australian National University in Canberra reported:

While television has the potential to provide useful information to viewers—and is celebrated for its educational function—the technology of television and the inherent nature of the viewing experience actually inhibit learning as we usually think of it. Very little cognitive, recallable, analyzable, thought-based learning takes place while watching TV.

The report further states:

The evidence is that television not only destroys the capacity of the viewer to attend, it also, by taking over a complex of direct and indirect neural pathways, decreases vigilance—the general state of arousal which prepares the organism for action should its attention be drawn to specific stimulus.<sup>47</sup>

Passive learning would have aroused Swami Vivekananda's ire today just as it did

p. 80.

47. Jerry Mander, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, p. 205.

44. Swami Prabhavananda, *How to Know God: The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali* (Hollywood: Vedanta Press, 1971), p. 179.

45. Jerry Mander, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, p. 209.

46. Jerry Mander, *In the Absence of the Sacred*,



at the turn of the century when he pounded his San Francisco students for blindly accepting whatever they read. 'The only value of knowledge is in the strengthening, the disciplining, of the mind,' he thundered to his Western audience.

By all this eternal swallowing it is a wonder that we are not all dyspeptics. Let us stop, and burn all the books, and get hold of ourselves, and think. You all talk [about] and get distracted over losing your 'individuality'. You are losing it every moment of your lives by this eternal swallowing.

With characteristic drama the swami then added:

If any one of you believes what I teach, I will be sorry. I will only be too glad if I can excite in you the power of thinking for yourselves....My ambition is to talk to men and women, not to sheep.<sup>48</sup>

In her book, *Mind and Media: The Effects*

48. *The Complete Works*, vol. 6, p. 64.

Today Americans demonstrate far greater vigilance of what they read in newspapers and magazines than what they see on television or film. In this connection, Vivekananda would have been pleased to note that the word *spin*—the process of shaping public opinion—has recently entered the American vocabulary; and a surprising seventy-one percent of Americans are strongly aware of what that word represents—that news journalists, in framing their stories, slant the news and thus get 'in the way of society solving its problems.' 'The accusations that the press is a watchdog gone out of control are increasingly evident in our surveys,' reported Andrew Kohut, director of the Times Mirror Center for The People and The Press.' (*U. S. News and World Report* (9 January, 1995, p. 45)

of *Television, Video Games and Computers*, Patricia Marks Greenfield offered her readers a constructive solution for developing the power of thought via the television media when she wrote: 'The damaging effects the electronic media can have on children are not intrinsic to the media but grow out of the ways the media are used.'

Television watching can become a passive, deadening activity if adults do not guide their children's viewing and teach children to watch critically and to learn from what they watch.<sup>49</sup>

Greenfield, a professor of psychology, emphasized the importance of teaching children critical viewing skills, which would then help them to distinguish TV fantasy from reality. Furthermore, citing a study which restricted the viewing time of six year olds, Greenfield concluded that selective, as opposed to indiscriminate, viewing 'caused shifts from a more impulsive to a more reflective intellectual style and produced increases in non-verbal IQ.'<sup>50</sup> Greenfield stressed that in educating children, the

*Television watching can become a passive, deadening activity if adults do not guide their children's viewing and teach children to watch critically and to learn from what they watch.*

—Patricia Marks Greenfield

electronic media should never be allowed to take the place of reading and writing.

Reading, unlike television viewing, is a conscious mental act. 'It is impossible to be in alpha level while reading,' Jerry Mander

49. Patricia Marks Greenfield, *Mind and Media: The Effects of Television, Video Games, and Computers*, p. 2.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

asserted in his book *In the Absence of the Sacred*, 'at least not if you want to understand what you read.'

The reader controls most of the elements of the process and can create the conditions for accepting the information. All of this is impossible with TV viewing. The information must be taken as it comes, without resistance.<sup>51</sup>

However, Patricia Greenfield alleged that a recent study showed that when sixth graders were taught critical television viewing skills, their reading comprehension also improved.<sup>52</sup>

Radio, like printed material, is a media that suppresses alpha waves. It communicates to its listeners situations that stimulate imagination.

Television, on the other hand, may depress imagination, report some media analysts. By visually taking in an external image stream, the viewer's own image-making brain function goes into dormancy. Patricia Greenfield cited a study in Canada which verifies that 'children's creativity as measured by their ability to think of multiple uses for common objects, declined after the introduction of television into their town.'<sup>53</sup> However, Greenfield added,

though television suppresses originality, it fosters visual perspective and detail in drawing.<sup>54</sup>

Imagination is essential in spiritual life. One of Swami Vivekananda's brother-disciples used to say: 'Today's imagination

is tomorrow's realization.' Why? Imagination is the conveyance that transports the aspirant to the threshold of God-vision. When the aspirant uses his or her imagination to generate concentration and meditation upon one's Chosen Ideal, the *kundalini* rises, as also one's consciousness. Swami Vivekananda explained the Yogic link between imagination and God-realization when he described the dynamics of the *kundalini*. 'The centre where all...residual sensations are, as it were, stored up,' Swamiji explained in one of his Raja Yoga classes, 'is called the *muladhara*, the root receptacle, and the coiled-up energy of action is *kundalini*, "the coiled up".'

It is very probable that the residual motor energy is also stored up in the same centre, as, after deep study or meditation on external objects, the part of the body where the *muladhara* centre is situated (probably the sacral plexus) gets heated.

Swamiji continued:

Now, if this coiled-up energy be roused and made active, and then consciously made to travel up the *sushumna* canal, as it acts upon centre after centre, a tremendous reaction will set in. *When a minute portion of energy travels along a nerve fibre and causes reaction from centres, the perception is either dream or imagination.*

But when by the power of long internal meditation the vast mass of energy stored up travels along the *sushumna*, and strikes the centres, the reaction is tremendous, immensely superior to the reaction of dream or imagination, immensely more intense than the reaction of sense-perception.<sup>55</sup>

Meditation strengthens imagination,

51. Jerry Mander, *In the Absence of the Sacred*, p. 82.

52. Patricia Marks Greenfield, *Mind and Media: The Effects of Television, Video Games, and Computers*, p. 79.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

55. *The Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. 164 (Italics added).



concentration and awareness, whereas a daily overdose of television dulls imagination, dims attention span, and diminishes human sensibility. Because television information largely bypasses the conscious regions of the mind to enter the viewer via the unconscious mind, corporate masterminds have, since the 1950s, researched television as a lucrative channel of subliminal advertising and brain-washing.

In the 1970s the advertising industry developed a system of intelligence called psychographics, motivational research based on peoples' fears, desires, and prejudices. 'You name the dwarfs and we

ing about sense-objects,' Swami Vivekananda stated,

things which we have seen, or we have heard, which we shall see or shall hear, things which we have eaten, or are eating, or shall eat, places where we have lived, and so on. We think of them or talk of them most of our time.<sup>57</sup>

These desires form powerful *samskaras*. No yogi could have better described the effects of these *samskaras* than Eric Clark, an investigative journalist, in his book *The Want Makers*. 'We don't pay much attention to

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play on every one,' Jerry Della Famina is quoted as saying in William Meyers' former best-seller, *The Image-Makers*.

We play on all the emotions and on all the problems, from not getting ahead...to the desire to be one of the crowd. Everyone has a button. If enough people have the same button, you have a successful ad and a successful product.<sup>56</sup>

Image transformation, or altering the viewer's perceptions, rather than the product, is another subtle form of manipulation in which advertisers link people's vulnerabilities to a product.

Advertisers—like Yoga psychologists—understand human nature and its desires. 'Most of our time is spent in think-

advertising,' Clark began in describing the average television viewer's passivity, '—we are unvigilant. The messages are being taken in and stored, ready to become action at the right moment.' Then quoting Dr. Herbert Krugman, head of General Electric's corporate advertising, Clark elaborated:

The effects of advertising on the individual are modest, but they are powerful in the mass and over time. Like erosion caused by shifting tides, little change occurs at any one moment, even though clear-cut effects appear eventually.<sup>58</sup>

Swami Vivekananda would have agreed. 'How countless these old past impressions must be, all lodged somewhere in the *chitta*,

56. William Meyers, *The Image-Makers* (New York: The New York Times Book Co., 1984), p. 7.

57. *The Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. 406.

58. Eric Clark, *The Want Makers* (New York: Viking Penguin: 1989), p. 13.

ready, waiting like tigers, to jump up!' he once described in a Raja Yoga class.<sup>59</sup>

When you are trying to think of God, that is the very time these *samskaras* appear. At other times they are not so active; but when you want them not, they are sure to be there, trying their best to crowd in your mind.<sup>60</sup>

What appear to the yogi as deterrents to meditation are to the TV viewer desires brought to the surface mind by the advertiser, then exploited. How? Though the yogi seeks the vision of the highest reality by renouncing desires that bind one to this world-illusion, the advertiser—through technological subterfuge—makes it his business to heighten desires by creating commodity dependencies.

Mander further delineated how advertising distorts empirical reality:

In the context of concrete reality, advertising can be understood as vacuous, absurd, rude, outrageous. Advertising can succeed only in an environment in which the real merges with the fictional, and all become semireal with equal tone and undifferentiated meaning. In that context advertising can use its technical tricks to jump forward out of the medium, creating its artificial unusualness.<sup>62</sup>

Successful advertising conditions its viewers to hanker after the phantom toys and treasures of television's world of *maya*.

Especially vulnerable to the tigers of desire are children. Children are easy prey

*...the present is amplified out of all proportion, and it is reasonable conjecture that adults are [also] being forced by television into accepting as normal the childish need for immediate gratification, as well as childish indifference to consequences.*

—Neil Postman

Successful advertising is *maya* at work—concealing and projecting. 'Every advertiser...knows that before you can convince anyone of anything, you shatter their existing mental set and then restructure an awareness along lines which are useful to you,' Jerry Mander, former advertising agent, explained.

You do this with a few simple techniques like fast-moving images, jumping among attention focuses, and switching moods. There's nothing to it.<sup>61</sup>

for advertisers who understand how—even without advertisements—television's image stream exacerbates the average human need for sense gratification. A 1950s' psychological study reported that British children who watched only BBC (which carries no advertising) exhibited more materialistic ambitions than those who did not watch television. For example, the study found that adolescent boys who watched television 'were more focused on what they would *have* in the future'; whereas adolescent boys who did not watch television 'were more focused on what they would be *doing*.'<sup>63</sup> Neil Postman, professor of media ecology at New York University, explained

59. *The Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. 233.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 233.

61. Jerry Mander, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, p. 197.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 307.

63. Patricia Marks Greenfield, *Mind and Media*:



that because television is a present-centred medium,

the present is amplified out of all proportion, and it is reasonable conjecture that adults are [also] being forced by television into accepting as normal the childish need for immediate gratification, as well as childish indifference to consequences.<sup>64</sup>

An advertiser's job is made easy by the fact that in our ignorance we, young or old, identify ourselves with the ego—the body along with its mental and physical attributes. As the ego reaches outward, its superimpositions multiply to such fantastic proportions that it foolishly defines itself with its possessions. 'If we can control the senses and order what they shall feel,'

The breakdown of family and community in America has created a lonely, impersonal society, and one of the few ways that citizens can express themselves or communicate with one another is through their possessions.<sup>66</sup>

Not only has advertising capitalized on the Westerner's loneliness and fractured sense of self, but the television media has helped to create it. Pretechnological people enjoyed a close relationship with the earth, the water, the trees, and the heavens. Today television's commanding presence in the home has helped to erode that sense of intimacy with nature. 'The average person, watching television for five hours per day,' Jerry Mander asserted, 'is physically engaged with—looking at and experienc-

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—William Meyers

Swami Vivekananda countered,

not let them order us about as they are doing now—if they can obey our commands, become our servants, the problem is solved at once. We are bound by the senses; they play upon us, make fools of us all the time.<sup>65</sup>

Susan Gianinno, an advertising researcher and former psychological counselor at the University of Chicago, described a modern mutant strain of ego-identification:

*The Effects of Television, Video Games, and Computers*, p. 51.

64. Neil Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood*, p. 80.

65. *The Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. 516.

ing—a machine. To that extent, the person is not relating to anything else in the environment.<sup>67</sup> Because the committed television viewer has lost contact with nature—its beauty and rhythms—nature has become irrelevant to the average person. Is this not evidenced by today's environmental crisis?

Vivekananda's master, Sri Ramakrishna, used to extoll the spiritual benefits of going into solitude—which, in olden times, meant forest retreats. For the Master spiritual solitude did not imply loneliness or isolation. 'After realizing God in solitude,' he would often remark, 'one may live in the

66. William Meyers, *The Image-Makers*, p. 49.

67. Jerry Mander, *In the Absence of the Sacred*, p. 76.

world.<sup>68</sup> With God-realization comes the spiritual sense of interconnectedness with everything in the universe. Brahman is seen as all-pervading Consciousness, the underlying Reality—a vision that precludes any sense of separateness.

To illustrate the sense of unity that accompanies this realization, the Master was one day gazing at a fresh patch of grass in the Kali temple garden, when he transcended normal consciousness and became identified with the spot. Suddenly as a man happened to walk across the grass, the Master was gripped with a corresponding, unbearable chest pain. He later disclosed that the pain he felt was like somebody trampling on his chest.<sup>69</sup>

Swami Vivekananda, who for three years led a solitary, wandering life in India before embarking on his Western mission, also experienced the expansion of heart that comes with God-realization. To his brother-disciple Swami Turiyananda he said: 'Haribhai, I am still unable to understand anything of your so-called religion.'<sup>70</sup> Then, according to *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, his body trembling with deep sorrow and emotion, Swamiji placed his hand on his heart and added,

'But my heart has expanded very much, and I have learnt to feel. Believe me, I feel intensely indeed.' His voice was choked with feeling; he could say no more.

In relating this incident, Swami Turiyananda was also overcome with emotion. With tears in his eyes, he sighed:

68. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 246.

69. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna: the Great Master*, Swami Jagadananda, trans. (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1952), pp. 261–2.

70. At that time, Swami Turiyananda had cherished the desire to live a life devoted to study and meditation, bereft of public work.

Can you imagine what passed through my mind on hearing the swami speak thus? 'Are not these,' I thought, 'the very words and feelings of Buddha?...I could clearly perceive that the sufferings of humanity were pulsating in the heart of Swamiji: his heart was a huge cauldron in which the sufferings of mankind were being made into a healing balm.'<sup>71</sup>

How different was Sri Ramakrishna's and Swami Vivekananda's world from our world of the 1990s! 'We have entered into a universe that has been re-formed by machines,' wrote Jerry Mander;

we are a species that lives its life within mechanistic creations; our environment is a product of our minds. Locked inside our cities and suburbs, working in our offices, controlling and conceptualizing nature as a raw material for our consumption, and now even including ourselves as raw material suitable for redevelopment, we are at one with the process.

Mander then speculated:

If we have a worldwide technical creature, then computers are its nervous system. Television is the way human minds are made compatible with the system and identical with one another; it is the sales system, and the audiovisual training mechanism.<sup>72</sup>

Mander's description gives us pause for concern. Are we that far away from 1984—an Orwellian society of a single media—like television—that daily reaches

71. His Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 1 (Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1979), p. 388.

72. Jerry Mander, *In the Absence of the Sacred*, p. 190.



into homes to programme its citizens with the same information at the same time, and through total media control brings about a state of unified mass consciousness? Are we becoming a society of television junkies who have relinquished original thinking? And what about today's children? Has the media invaded and plundered their childhood? Have the grown-up messages on prime-time TV prematurely shattered their innocence?

Yes, some media critics claim. 'Television erodes the dividing line between childhood and adulthood in three ways, all having to do with its undifferentiated accessibility,' Neil Postman posits in his book, *The Disappearance of Childhood*:

first, because it requires no instruction to grasp its form; second, because it does not make complex demands on either mind or behavior; and, third, because it does not segregate its audience.

Postman elaborated:

The new media environment that is emerging provides everyone, simultaneously, with the same information. Given the conditions I have described, electric media find it impossible to withhold any secrets. Without secrets, of course, there can be no such thing as childhood.

Because television operates around the clock—which also makes it physically impossible to segregate its adult and child audience—it requires a continuous supply of information to hold its audience. 'Thus,' Postman wrote, 'television must make use of every existing taboo in culture'<sup>73</sup>—which, in turn, endangers the childhood of every juvenile watching.

Somehow Americans have never feared television as an Orwellian eye—as they have the mainframe computer—especially when it first entered the marketplace several decades ago. The scare ended with the advent of the personal computer—now ensconced in thirty-seven percent of American households; and with information networks such as Internet, computer technology has ultimately come to mean decentralization. Suddenly it has become possible for even a lower-echelon white-collar employee to access encyclopedic amounts of business data in order to obtain a high-level evaluation of his or her company's operations, which can then be submitted to the company president via E-mail.

However computer technology has become a mixed blessing in the workplace. Although employers have benefited from both the cost- and time-efficient aspects of computers, employees have sometimes likened working with computers to 'the coal-mining of the nineties.'<sup>74</sup> Computerized office management has undoubtedly streamlined secretarial work—but sometimes to the point of nerve-racking tedium. Secretaries complain that they are more apt to be evaluated according to impersonal production quotas than for their enthusiasm and ideas.

Computerization has accelerated the pace of life in the workplace and at home. The electronic age is generating an unprecedented amount of information of which we cannot keep abreast—physically or emotionally. The result is a marked rise in stress-related illness and human anxiety. 'The technology boom,' wrote *Newsweek* journalists in a March 6, 1995 article entitled 'Breaking Point,' 'adds a peculiar twist to stress in the '90s.'

73. Neil Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood*, p. 82.

74. Jerry Mander, *In the Absence of the Sacred*, p. 57.



Today there is no downtime, no escape—from work or from other people. We have cell phones in the car and beepers in our pockets, and we carry them to Disneyland, to the beach, to the bathroom. It means, says Boston University Medical Center's Dr. Mark Moskowitz, that a lot of people are working 24 hours a day, seven days a week, even when they're not technically at work.' A formula, says Moskowitz, for first class exhaustion.<sup>75</sup>

Jerry Mander summed up our ever-advancing malady when he wrote:

With the industrial revolution, many things began moving at mechanical speeds. As the natural environment was paved over, and as human life moved into human-made environments, the natural rhythms of our reactions gave way to industrial rhythms (i. e. assembly-line workers)...Now that machines move at electronic speeds, the wheel of activity turns even faster, with us on it.<sup>76</sup>

Although Vivekananda's turn-of-the-century industrial world could never hope to approach the mad electronic speed of the 1990s, Swamiji detected even then the human syndrome that today drives us to exhaustion. 'We are caught, though we came to catch,' the Swami once told a Los Angeles audience in January 1900.

We came to enjoy; we are being enjoyed. We came to rule; we are being ruled. We came to work; we are being worked....We are being worked upon by other minds, and we are always strug-

gling to work on other minds. We want to enjoy the pleasures of life; and they eat into our vitals. We want to get everything from nature, but we find in the long run that nature takes everything from us—depletes us and casts us aside.<sup>77</sup>

We attempt with each new decade's increasingly sophisticated technology to gain perfection in the external world. Foolishly we seek to unfold our divinity outside of ourselves.

Computers have not only entered the home and the workplace, but also the classroom. Computer networks are transforming education and the way students learn. As computer literacy is becoming a requirement in public education, media critics are beginning to evaluate the impact of computerized education on the student.

Some argue that computers in the classroom are making education less threatening. The computer issues the assignment, the student responds, and when the assignment is complete the computer screen flashes a user-friendly note of praise. In this way, the student feels relaxed enough to learn without worrying about approval from a teacher-authority figure. Furthermore, some media critics argue, through the more solitary process of computer education the student learns by self-motivation rather than by classroom competition.

To some extent, Swami Vivekananda might have agreed with this modern 'hands off' style of education. After all, Vedanta says that knowledge is within. 'Like fire in a piece of flint, knowledge exists in the mind,' Vivekananda asserted; 'suggestion is the friction which brings it out.'<sup>78</sup> Therefore he warned against authority figures who suffocate a child's natural desire for knowledge. 'Too often learning is killed by undue paren-

75. Geoffrey Cowley with Mary Hager and Adam Rogers, 'Breaking Point,' *Newsweek* (6 March, 1995), p. 59.

76. Jerry Mander, *In the Absence of the Sacred*, p. 65.

77. *The Complete Works*, vol. 2, p. 2.

78. *The Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. 28.



tal domination,'<sup>79</sup> Swamiji charged at one time. At another time he cautioned: 'You see, no one can teach anybody.'

The teacher spoils everything by thinking that he is teaching. Thus Vedanta says that within man is all knowledge—even in a boy it is so—and it requires only an awakening, and that much is the work of the teacher.<sup>80</sup>

Here it is important to note that Vivekananda stressed individual, not solitary, growth.

What, then, would Swamiji have thought of Carnegie Mellon University's experimental 'just in time' lectures? At computer workstations students receive a video picture to which they respond by sending video E-mail messages to their professor, who responds, in turn, with another video

gifts is the giving of spiritual knowledge, the next is the giving of secular knowledge....<sup>81</sup> Here, the key word is *giving*. In the Indian tradition, knowledge—sacred or secular—is transmitted from teacher to disciple.

Swami Vivekananda once said: 'It is remarkable that almost every good idea in this world can be carried to a disgusting extreme.'<sup>82</sup> And in the context of the possible future of computerized education—wherein even traditional libraries may become defunct—<sup>83</sup> traditional academicians would probably agree. According to *Newsweek's* article 'Wiring the Ivory Tower,' they are concerned, as Thoreau was in his day, 'that we are in danger of becoming the tools of our tools. And these tools are getting smarter by the day.'<sup>84</sup>

What type of person is today's com-

*If children are separated from their parents by hours of TV, from their playmates by video games, and from their teachers by teaching machines, where are they supposed to learn to be human?*

—Jennifer Tanaka

clip. Each instructor-student communication is archived on the computer network in order to build a library of questions and answers for future students' use. 'This could completely break down the structure of students sitting in classrooms in front of lecturers,' commented Stephen Director, dean of the College of Engineering at Carnegie Mellon.

Some old-fashioned academicians protest 'teacherless' classrooms, maintaining that there is an important distinction between information and knowledge. They assert that knowledge requires a teacher. Here Swami Vivekananda would have agreed when he declared: 'The highest of

puterized education producing? What kind of 'tools' are we becoming? Marian Kester, reporting in the *Toronto Globe*, poignantly framed the modern-day scenario for us:

If children are separated from their parents by hours of TV, from their playmates by video games, and from their teachers by teaching machines, where are they supposed to learn to be human?<sup>85</sup>

79. *The Complete Works*, vol. 7, p. 269.

80. *The Complete Works*, vol. 5, p. 366.

81. *The Complete Works*, vol. 3, p. 133 (Italics added).

82. *The Complete Works*, vol. 3, p. 67.

83. Jennifer Tanaka, 'Wiring the Ivory Tower,' *Newsweek* (30 January, 1995), p. 62.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

Leading-edge computer companies are gearing their advertising campaigns to these concerns. 'Be there with the child,' a magazine ad might advise apprehensive parents trying to develop computer literacy at home, 'to support and encourage, and to just plain share the excitement.' Or, an ad might suggest to parents, 'Integrate computer projects with away-from-computer activities.'<sup>86</sup>

Undoubtedly these are mere stop-gap measures for preventing the depersonalization that can accompany computer literacy.

This raises a second question: What type of education does computerized learning produce? Some media analysts, like Mander, claim that more objective linear thought will prevail and more subtle thought processes will fall into eventual disuse and disappear.

Others assert the opposite—that multimedia in education means flashy video clips, musical sound bytes and colourful animations designed to compete with television.<sup>89</sup> 'But while multimedia may

*This raises a second question: What type of education does computerized learning produce? Some media analysts, like Mander, claim that more objective linear thought will prevail and more subtle thought processes will fall into eventual disuse and disappear.*

For lasting measures, Swami Vivekananda's 'man-making' education provides the spiritual gauge that puts computers, televisions and other multimedia gadgets in their proper perspective. 'We want that education,' Swamiji reminds us,

by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet.<sup>87</sup>

As computers are replacing teachers, Jerry Mander maintains, they are changing the content of the information learned in schools, from the more subtle information that goes with the traditional teacher-student relationship, to the more hard-edged, data-based, objective content that goes with the machine-user relationship.<sup>88</sup>

appeal to the MTV-fueled rhythms of a hot-wired generation,' Newsweek's article on 'Techno Mania' states,

p. 61.

89. Video games are the natural outgrowth of television and computer technology. According to Jerry Mander, 'Video games and computers accelerate a process that has already been stimulated by a generation of television viewing. The electronic symbols on the screen enter our brain, pass through our nervous system, and stimulate the fight-or-flight reaction that still lives within us, and that expresses itself here through our hands. Very little thinking is needed or used. The object is to respond without thought, instantly.' (*In the Absence of the Sacred*, p. 65)

But to Patricia Greenfield's psychological scrutiny, playing video games is 'learning to deal with multiple interacting variables'—a significant accomplishment in a complex world of systems with multiple interacting factors. She further asserts that video games may be the inception of human interactions with artificial intelligence. (*Mind and Media*:

86. 'Eight Tips for Nurturing Computer Literacy at Home,' Nec Special Advertising Section, 1994.

87. *The Complete Works*, vol. 5, p. 342.

88. Jerry Mander, *In the Absence of the Sacred*,



some critics believe that all that hot-linking is an educational detriment. Considering the sorry state of literacy, there's a real danger in even a partial abandonment of narrative forms and rigorous modes of thought associated with logical arguments, where A leads to B.<sup>90</sup>

'Multimedia's forte is not reason, but hot emotional impact,' concluded Steven Levy, reporting for *Newsweek*.<sup>91</sup>

However, media analysts agree that in spite of the proliferation of information in today's electronic age, there is the danger that many students learning by computer will more than likely display production without comprehension, information without knowledge. In *Science* magazine, Joseph Menosky, explained that with computerized education there is often a failure to understand the principles underlying programs.<sup>92</sup>

Perhaps one of the most profound effects of the information revolution is the juggling of our human consciousness between empirical reality composed of atoms and virtuality comprised of bits.<sup>93</sup> These bits have produced the electronic contributions of our information age: computer documents, spreadsheets, audio CDs, multimedia CD-ROMs, movie special effects, and virtual-reality environments ('the human experience of perceiving and interacting through sensors and effectors with a computer-modeled environment').<sup>94</sup> In

*Newsweek*, a mainstream American magazine, Steven Levy wrote:

As more of our experience comes to us by way of bits, reality itself gradually changes. Literally out of nothing, a new dimension emerges: cyberspace, a place made out of bits, whose intangible nature does not prevent it from becoming a second home, or a primary workplace, for masses of infonauts.<sup>95</sup>

However, the Vedantist who enters this high-tech multiplicity is not deceived by such worlds within worlds where consciousness may be 'juggled' between atoms and bits. For a seeker of Truth, the goal is to purify ordinary consciousness in order to transcend this world of *maya*. Cyberspace is by no means the ultimate dimension of reality; it is still *maya*—a house of mirrors that we must step behind in order to find the One without a second. 'Everything in the universe is that One,' Swamiji reminds us, 'appearing in various forms.'

When a little part of it comes, as it were, into this network of time, space, and causation it takes forms; take off the network, and it is all one.<sup>96</sup>

In many respects today's electronic media gives us genuine cause for alarm. However we cannot overlook its unifying effect that can transform a diverse global society into a community—one that mourns a president's assassination, stands in horror of atrocities seen in remote areas of the world, and feels a sense of brotherhood from the athletic feats performed at international events.

In each age we are given tools for self-knowledge—so also in today's electronic

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*The Effects of Television, Video Games, and Computers*, pp. 114, 110)

90. Steven Levy, 'Techno Mania,' *Newsweek* (27 February, 1995), p. 29.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 29

92. Jerry Mander, *In the Absence of the Sacred*, p. 62.

93. A bit is a unit of computer memory, or information storage capacity.

94. 'Michael Antanoff, 'Living in a Virtual World,' *Popular Science* (June 1993), p. 83.

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95. Steven Levy, 'Techno Mania,' *Newsweek* (27 February, 1995), p. 29.

96. *The Complete Works*, vol. 2, p. 461.

age. But as the computer industry merges with television and film, transforming them into digitalised media,<sup>97</sup> Western civilization will have to come to grips with its temptation of becoming more and more fueled by electronic works that can condition and control our human and spiritual evolution. So long as we are aware of its dangers, we can use technology as *our* tool—and thus resist becoming its tool.

Today it is the threat of depersonalization that will be without doubt one of the great obstacles to Vivekananda's character-building education—a philosophy that teaches expansion of personality and self-knowledge. 'Each one can grow and strengthen his personality,' Swamiji declared.

This is one of the great practical things, and this is the secret of all education. This has a universal application. In the life of a householder, in the life of the poor, the

rich, the man of business, the spiritual man, in every one's life, it is a great thing, the strengthening of this personality.<sup>98</sup>

From such education come heroes and heroines of great heart and mind.

But as we travel to virtual worlds of simulated sight, sound and touch or enter the Internet—a cyberspace wonderland of postal mail, coffee klatches, public lectures, academic seminars, locker-room banter and print periodicals—<sup>99</sup> we may well become mesmerized by its intriguing messages and novel pleasures. That is the time to re-invoke Vivekananda's warning advice—magic words that can break our spell. A hundred years ago, Maud Stumm, a young artist, remembered:

A very large and elaborate dinner was given at Ridgely [Manor]. The flowers and lights on the table were wonderful, and the ladies [were] all in the loveliest gowns and jewels.

Enchanted by the glamor and beauty of the evening, Maud then felt Swamiji's eyes and quiet voice: 'Don't let it fool you, Baby'<sup>100</sup>—a timeless watchword for those of us who may be traveling great distances down the information highway into the new millennium. □

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97. 'Television will become a communications instrument,' say Steve Reynolds, an analyst at Link Resources, a New York market research firm. 'It will become a vehicle for shopping and some kinds of transactions. And we believe that it's going to be a vehicle for new kinds of entertainment genres.' (*The Christian Science Monitor* [Tuesday, 17 January, 1995], p. 8) Movies such as *Jurassic Park*, *Forrest Gump* and the docudrama *JFK* are forerunners of an entertainment genre wherein screen animation and real-life drama, fantasy and reality, intersect and overlap until their boundaries become confused and disappear.

See also Richard Corliss, 'Hey, Let's Put On a Show,' *Time* (27 March, 1995), pp. 54-60.

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98. *The Complete Works*, vol. 2, p. 16.

99. Steven Levy, 'Indecent Proposal: Censor the Net,' *Newsweek* (3 April, 1995), p. 53.

100. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda: His Second Visit to the West, New Discoveries* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973), p. 109.



# The West Meets the East

## An interview with Venerable Ananda Meitreyaya

*We are thankful to Pravrajika Brahmaprana of the Sarada Convent, Santa Barbara, for having kindly sent us the following transcript.*

'Harmony of Religions' was the theme of a retreat, held at the Vedanta Society of Southern California, at Santa Barbara. As a special guest, Venerable Ananda Meitreyaya, a respected teacher in today's Theravada Buddhist tradition, agreed to participate in a question-and-answer session in the Sarada Convent library. The topics of the interview ranged from meditation techniques and spiritual experiences to the Buddhist's concept of the Self and spiritualizing our everyday life—truths that can enrich anyone's spiritual life.

A master of both the Theravada and Mahayana schools of Buddhism, this ninety-nine-year-old monk joined the Buddhist monastic order in Sri Lanka at the age of fifteen, whereupon he soon gained the reputation as an outstanding teacher and scholar in Pali, Sanskrit, and several other languages. Venerable Ananda Meitreyaya was one of the few monastic scholars who actively participated in the famous Sixth Council in Burma, in 1953, translating and correcting translations of Buddhist texts. Reputed as an authority of Buddhism, he presided for some time as the president of that Council. The Venerable Ananda Meitreyaya served as Chairman of the Department of Buddhist Philosophy and Dean of Faculty of Oriental Studies at the University of Sri Lanka and was, for some time, the Vice-Chancellor of that university until his retirement in 1965.

But not only is the Venerable Ananda Meitreyaya a highly qualified exponent of Buddhism, he is a longtime friend of the

Ramakrishna Mission. Inspired at an early age by Swami Vivekananda, he has studied and practised raja-yoga and became closely associated with the swamis of the Ramakrishna Mission in Sri Lanka. Today, the Venerable Ananda Meitreyaya proudly states that he has over, 1,000 pieces of literature relating to Ramakrishna-Vedanta and Hinduism in his own personal library!

Because of the Venerable Ananda Meitreyaya's personal qualifications and relationship with the Ramakrishna Order, the following interview can be of special value to any student of Vedanta, and follower of the Sanatana Dharma.

### Introduction

**Q.** Is the Theravada School of Buddhism the oldest school of Buddhism?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you have an oral tradition?

**A.** Yes. There was a time when monks handed down all scriptures orally. But after three centuries all Buddhist scriptures were put into writing. However, I learnt by heart some large volumes of Buddhist scriptures and even whole grammar books. In Burma there is one monk who recites in Pali the entire Three Pitakas by heart. There are some other monks who have learnt one fifth of the entire Pali texts by heart.

Today in monasteries which follow the ancient system, our monks have to learn a lot by heart. But the young monks who follow the modern ways memorize very little.

In their practice also they have slight regard for the ancient ways.

As regards the training of the novices, there is a book called *Samanerasikkha* which contains all things a novice should know and also how he should be trained. For the monks who have received their higher ordination, there is the book *Patimokkha*, or disciplinary rules. Apart from these books, an ordained monk must learn the *Sutta Pitaka*, the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, and the *Vinaya Pitaka*. But nowadays in Sri Lanka the majority of the modern monks care very little for that kind of study.

**Q.** How many monastics are there in Sri Lanka?

**A.** Not less than 10,000.

**Q.** How many monks are in your Order?

**A.** Nearly 500.

**Q.** Was the abbot at the monastery where you first entered considered your teacher, or *guru*?

**A.** He was my teacher and chief *guru*. But some years after his death, when I received more freedom, I sought teachers of other systems, just to know whether or not their systems were practical.

**Q.** When you receive your teacher, is a *mantra* given?

**A.** We don't put special emphasis on the *mantra*, rather we are taught a system to follow. Generally, however, all pious Buddhists repeat the word 'Buddho' or 'Namo Buddhaya.' The latter one I repeated almost every moment from my boyhood.

### ***Vedanta and Buddhism***

**Q.** What are the similarities between Vedanta and Buddhism? Is the Hindu *jnani* the same as the Theravada Buddhist?

**A.** If anybody reads carefully without

any prejudice the philosophy of Vedanta and the philosophy of Buddhism, there is not much difference except the word *atma*. If we don't quarrel about words but try to understand their meaning, then there is no question. However, mostly people are afraid of the terms; they don't stop to think what the term implies.

As for the *jnani*, when I read the *Drg-Drasya-Viveka*, by Shankaracharya, I found it to be very similar to our *vipassana* meditation system: to understand what I am and to discriminate.

The Buddhist meditation is mostly the negative side—this is not 'I', that is not 'I'; it doesn't give any positive side, because people will misunderstand. But as far as I understand the Vedanta system, the clue to the positive side is also given. But we come to that only when the attachment to the negative side disappears.

### ***Meditation Practices***

**Q.** What are the means of achieving the goal of life?

**A.** The Buddhist way is to understand what I really am. We call it the 'Vipassana System'. First the aspirant must build good character, which is called *sila*, or keeping precepts. In this he abstains from evil ways.

Second he must practice concentration, of which there are about forty methods, one of which he must select that is suitable to his temperament. What Hindu yoga books refer to as *trataka yoga* is included in this concentration system.

There are many ways to concentrate the mind. Take some symbol like Buddha's statue as a symbol of infinite compassion. First fix your eyes on it. Then place a replica of that picture in your mind. Once you see the picture in your mind, then you won't forget it, and the mind will not go to any other object. This is how you develop concentration. If you can keep the mind in this mood of one-pointedness for one hour, then



you have come to a certain level of development. You can control yourself. When you forget all other things, no temptation comes. When there is no temptation, then the mind becomes purer and purer. When the mind becomes cleaner, the object you see mentally appears brighter, because the purity of the mind is reflected on the object. At last it appears as the disc of the sun or moon or some other light. Then you can expand that light. At last, you may see light everywhere. You must then fix the mind on this light. From that, you develop one-pointedness to a very high level. That is called *samadhi*, of which there are four stages beginning with *savitarka samadhi*.

Third, the Buddhist has to develop *vipassana*, or introspection. He must examine himself. What is this ego? And he analyses his body. As the aspirant begins to examine his body, his mind becomes very sensitive. He feels even the blood circulation inside the body, how the cells are rising and vanishing. All these things begin to appear to him. At last he sees that the body is nothing but a collection of material units rising and vanishing every moment. There is no ego. Nothing permanent is there. It is called *anitya*, impermanence. Then when he examines how his mind works, he sees how all mental states—even good and bad—rise and vanish. There also he finds impermanence. What he thought was 'I' is neither mind nor body. His attachment to the so-called 'I' then disappears, and he comes to perfect understanding, or the vision of Nirvana. In other words, he comes to the realization of the four Great Truths. This is the goal of Buddhist religious life.

**Q.** Are there many forms of meditation taught in Theravada Buddhism?

**A.** There are two forms: *samatha* and *vipassana*. *Samatha* leads to the suppression of all mental defilements and thereby to higher stages of ecstasy and peace of mind, whereas *vipassana* leads to enlightenment—

the eradication of all mental defilements and the realization of Nirvana.

**Q.** You mentioned a meditation on the Buddha. Do those who meditate on the Buddha feel that through his grace, the gates to Nirvana are opened?

**A.** Meditation on the Buddha leads to calmness of mind, but not directly to Nirvana. The only way to realization is through the practice of the *vipassana* meditation. The gates to Nirvana have already been opened by the Buddha by means of pointing out the way thereto. Apart from that we expect nothing more from him. The physician gives the medicine, we have to drink it. The result is the recovery from the disease.

*The Buddha is not an Incarnation of God, nor a mere state of the mind. He is a person who, after a long practice of virtues and after deep investigation and introspection, attained to full wisdom. There is a potential as a spark under ash within every man that can be blazed to Buddhahood, if one so wishes.*

**Q.** Do you feel that the Buddha is a state of mind, a state of experience, or an Incarnation?

**A.** The Buddha is not an Incarnation of God, nor a mere state of the mind. He is a person who, after a long practice of virtues and after deep investigation and introspection, attained to full wisdom. There is a potential as a spark under ash within every man that can be blazed to Buddhahood, if one so wishes.

### *Meditation on Mindfulness*

**Q.** How can we develop mindfulness?

**A.** In the beginning one has to be mindful of every action. This removes forgetfulness and inattentiveness. Then one has to be mindful of one's feelings and be aware of



them as they rise and vanish. Next one must be mindful and aware of one's consciousness as it rises and vanishes. Once one has developed mindfulness to that level, one must be aware and mindful of mental characteristics as they arise and vanish.

At every step one must investigate their causes and conditions, whether they are subject to change, and so on. From this thorough investigation, one realizes that this mind-body process is not mere theory. When the full understanding of your microcosmic, mundane existence dawns, at that moment, its opposite side, or supramundane state, will become manifest through vision. This is the practice of mindfulness in brief.

**Q.** When one practices mindfulness, is it a discipline of being aware of only one thing at a time, or is it more of an awareness of a spectrum?

**A.** In the beginning, one is mindful of only one thing or state each moment. But as one develops mindfulness, one may be mindful of a range of things collectively.

**Q.** Is mindfulness more of an awareness of the whole table, whereas concentration is awareness of only the jug on the table?

**A.** Where there is mindfulness there is awareness; and where there are mindfulness and awareness, there is concentration. There may be a difference as regards their development. But mindfulness and awareness never arise without concentration. For example, if the whole table is the object of mindfulness and awareness, the same table is the object of concentration, which arise simultaneously. If one knows Buddhist psychology, this is not a problem.

**Q.** But doesn't the mind tend to be aware of only one thing at a time, but jumping quickly from thing to thing? Is it possible for the mind to be aware of different things

simultaneously?

**A.** The mind is able to be aware of many things as a whole, as one object. From the Buddhist point of view, what we conventionally call 'mind' is not the same thing every moment. It is a stream of mind-units continually rising and vanishing. Within one second, more than 1,000 mind-units may rise and vanish. Though there is only one mind-unit per object, because of the rapidity of the rising and vanishing, we feel as though one mind is aware of many objects.

**Q.** So to practice mindfulness, one must be the Witness?

**A.** Yes, conventionally speaking, I may say, 'You have to be the Witness.' If you expect to attain inner development, you should not be attached to anything in the world.

**Q.** Isn't there a danger in this discipline of becoming too self-absorbed in one's own mental processes to the detriment of other people and things around one?

**A.** If you are properly mindful of yourself, there is no possibility of selfishness to arise within you. Where there is mindfulness there is no selfishness.

Suppose you look at yourself from the Vedantic standpoint: 'Brahma satyam jaganmithya.' (Brahman is the only Truth and the world is illusory.) You are a microcosm, and if you look at it mindfully and see no reality in it, is there any possibility for selfishness to arise within you? When you realize the microcosm, so also you see the macrocosm from the same point of view.

### *Spiritual Experience*

**Q.** Is it possible to have glimpses of Brahman?

**A.** Till one attains at least to the state called *gotrabhu-nyaya* level one cannot



receive the glimpse of Nirvana. The *gotrabhū* state lasts only one instant, followed by a 'stream-entry' stage, in which Nirvana is clearly seen for the first time. At that moment one sees that the world is a mass of suffering. Belief in one's separate ego is rooted out. In Sanskrit, this 'stream-entrance' is called *srota-apatti*.

Perhaps the Vedantic description of 'the consciousness of Brahman—unity within all' refers to some part of the aspirant's experience. In Buddhist scriptures a similar state is called *vinñāna-cayatana*, or the state of infinite consciousness, in which the aspirant feels that his consciousness, or mind, has pervaded everywhere.

**Q.** Does he experience a sense of fullness within?

**A.** He may feel so.

**Q.** How long does such a state last?

**A.** The vision of Nirvana lasts only for a very short time. Then the aspirant emerges from that state to his usual ordinary level, but less attached to the world. When he attends to his duties, he may not think of Nirvana, but the impression of Nirvana does not disappear from his memory.

**Q.** Is this a vision or *samadhi*?

**A.** From the Buddhist point of view, it is actually *samadhi*, though it lasts only for a very short time. But if the aspirant likes, he may fix his mind on Nirvana and remain in the same mood for hours. This state is called *samapatti*. Others, though they can never forget that experience, may not be able to live in that mood, because they attend to their householder-duties. Those who are able to continually utilize that experience will quickly attain perfection. Others who do not, may delay in attaining the goal for as long as seven lives.

**Q.** So that is a clear example of the

importance of reliving one's experiences in meditation, isn't it?

**A.** Yes, till you attain to full realization.

**Q.** How should one react to a spiritual experience? Is there a danger of feeling too fulfilled by it?

**A.** Suppose one received the first experience. One should tell it to one's meditation teacher and clear any doubt about the genuineness of the experience. If one is satisfied with that first experience, it will be an obstacle to further progress. Be watchful of your experience and examine whether or not you are inclined to feel 'I have got an experience.' If you are attached to the experience, you have not fully realized. Go further and practise under the instructions of your *guru*. Read the instructions of holy persons and follow them.

**Q.** What are the stages of spiritual illumination?

**A.** There are four: *srota-apatti* (stream-entry), *sakrdagami* (once-returner's level), *anagami* (non-returner's level), and finally the level of *arhatship* (perfect sainthood).

In the first stage, the vision of Reality comes, which is called *srotapanna*—entrance to the stream, to the real, holy path. On one side, the aspirant sees the world as impermanent, as illusion; on the other side, he sees the Reality. That is Nirvana. For just a moment the aspirant sees that, then the vision disappears. Again he comes back to normal consciousness. Still the aspirant has some weaknesses and again has to practise self-discrimination.

After some time, the aspirant develops his inner knowledge and inner vision. He comes to the same state a second time, but it is more developed and higher. With this vision, some of his attachment to the world disappears. But still he must come back. When he examines his experiences, the aspirant understands that he is not yet perfect. Again he practises discrimination.

Then the third stage comes. Herein, he roots out anger, and sensuality entirely disappears from him. The vision of Nirvana becomes clearer than before. However, when he examines himself, he finds that there is still some ego. So he must continue to practise discrimination.

At last he comes to the full understanding. All his remaining weaknesses are rooted out. Now the light of Nirvana is as perfect as daylight. In such a state, he sees perfectly the world as it is, as well as its opposite side. He becomes a *jivanmukta*.

**Q.** Will visions come to anyone who is sincerely one-pointed?

**A.** One should not have a desire for a vision. When the mind is free from allurements and pure, naturally one gets the vision of the supramundane. There are some, however, who are very good in character, but unless their mind is made mature by proper meditation, they are unable to rise up to the level where they should get the vision of Reality.

### *The Heart*

**Q.** Is such a man of realization, one who has opened the Wisdom-Eye, aware that his seat of consciousness is in the heart?

**A.** I think that he is aware that his seat of consciousness is in the heart.

**Q.** In Hinduism, the heart is considered one of the most suitable seats of meditation for most aspirants. Is this also true in Buddhist meditation?

**A.** According to Buddhist tradition, the heart is the seat of the mind. From that basis, it seems that the heart is one of the most suitable seats of meditation.

### *The Self*

**Q.** In Hinduism, there is the idea of the Inner Controller. But in Buddhism, is the

idea *sunyata*?

**A.** *Sunyata* is the last stage. In the beginning, it is the Inner Controller. In Theravada Buddhism, we don't take *sunyata* as an Inner Controller. We have to realize the *sunyata* of the world. *Sunyata* means emptiness of any reality.

**Q.** Who then is the Inner Controller?

**A.** One's own mindful mind. The faculty of reasoning accompanied by mindfulness is our Inner Controller.

**Q.** Is that Inner Controller felt in the heart?

**A.** Yes. A person who has developed it feels it. That is the God within.

However, for some persons there comes some obstacle. If they think that God is a person and they personify and imagine some form, in the beginning it will be helpful. But if he retains this same attitude, he cannot develop.

**Q.** He has to go beyond form?

**A.** Yes. The form disappears.

**Q.** Then does it become the Inner Controller?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Then finally the Witness?

**A.** Yes. Then you see no God, but your Self. I am That.

A form or concept imagined is an 'inner controller' so long as the mind is fixed on it. The real Inner Controller is the quality or faculty of reason which analyzes, criticizes, and discriminates, which is accompanied by mindfulness.

The faculty of reason which is developed into full Wisdom is the Witness.

**Q.** When you say 'inner controller', do you mean the Self, the Atman, or something else?

**A.** Buddha used Atman as a conven-



tional truth, not as the Ultimate Truth. As everything we experience is subject to change, there can be no Atman in that experience of change. We Buddhists don't use the word Atman, because ordinary people use this term to mean something limited like the individual ego.

Q. But the real Self, the higher Self...?

A. According to the Buddhist way of looking at things, when one says 'self', the word self limits its sense by itself. So long as we limit ourselves to the notion of Self, we will not get out of that limited stage. Whenever we root out the attachment to limitation, we become free. This is not a state we can express or name by positive terms. We call it Nirvana, a negative term, which means 'freedom from binding'. It is not 'Nothingness', but it is beyond words.

Q. Can it be called Fullness?

A. As a conventional term, we may call it 'Fullness'. But even the word Fullness seems to be a relative term. Nirvana is to be experienced, but not to be expressed by any positive terms; for all such terms are coined to express the conditioned, whereas Nirvana is Unconditioned.

Q. To try to express the Unconditioned, then, is like a defilement?

A. Yes. By means of words you cannot explain it. Always you have to refer to it with the negative expression 'neti, neti'—not this, not this.

However, even in Buddhism you can find the term Atman for Nirvana. One passage reads: 'Monks live with the Atman for their refuge.' But there the commentary says that Atman means Nirvana. Sometimes even Buddha used the word *atta* (which is Pali for Atman) for Nirvana. But at the same time, the commentary clarifies that he did not mean individuality, or ego. The ego is limited.

Q. Atman is one with Brahman.

A. Yes, according to Vedantic terminology. We Buddhists recognize the word *brahma-bhuta*, which implies both the Buddha and *arhats* (perfect saints). *Brahma-yana*, the highest vehicle or the way to the highest good (Nirvana), also means The Noble Eightfold Path. In the *Sutta Pitaka*, we find both these words. From this it seems that the Buddha and his disciples have used the word Brahman to express holiness, or perfection.

According to Dr. Grimm, a German Buddhist, and his followers, Brahman, Atman, and Nirvana mean the same thing. This is a point of controversy between orthodox and non-orthodox Buddhist scholars. I have not yet reached my own conclusion on this point.

Q. When a Buddhist rishi sees a person, what does he see?

A. According to convention, I would say that he sees a person. But from an absolute point of view, I would say that he sees states.

Q. Like waves?

A. Yes.

Q. It must take a tremendous amount of self-control for a rishi to walk in a conventional way, doesn't it?

A. Even though one has realized the Ultimate Truth, it is not difficult for the wise to use convention without being deluded. Suppose a man works in his field as a farmer. If the same man owns a shop, in his shop he successfully works as a merchant.

### Reincarnation

Q. What is it that reincarnates?

A. According to some, it is the self. But from the ultimate point of view, we see that self as a stream of mind-units rising and falling every moment, leaving no gap—just

like a cinema picture. A series of pictures is falling on a screen—that is the nature of what we call 'mind'. It is this same stream of mind-units that leaves this physical body at death and flows to another physical body, gross or fine, as the person's karmic force has determined at the last moment.

In conventional language, we say that the mind, or self, passes from this body to another, but in accordance with the

develop introspection. By developing introspection, one becomes enlightened. That is perfection from the Buddhist point of view. Where there is enlightenment, there are all virtues.

**Q.** Does one virtue bring everything else?

**A.** One virtue brings all allied virtues, because virtues are related to each other. As

**Q.** *What are the obstacles that prevent the flame within from blazing?*

**A.** *Unmindfulness, ignorance, and attachment to worldliness.*

**Q.** *Samskaras seem so difficult to root out. How can we speed up that process?*

**A.** *Be always mindful and full of awareness of where you proceed.*

Absolute Truth, it is a stream of mind-units, somewhat like the current of electricity. Every mind-unit is a store of past impressions, which pass from one mind-unit to every succeeding one.

### *Spiritual Qualifications*

**Q.** What are the qualities you consider most essential for spiritual life?

**A.** Simplicity, sense-control, celibacy, purity, self-discrimination, dauntless energy, and self-confidence in one's practices.

**Q.** What is the connection between virtues and enlightenment? Is the perfectly moral man an enlightened man, or is enlightenment something more than perfection in virtues?

**A.** Virtue is absolutely necessary for spiritual development. According to Buddhism, virtue is the foundation of spiritual development. Establishing oneself in virtue or morality, one should then develop concentration, mindfulness and awareness. One should apply the practice of virtue to

one virtue develops, all others follow. They are interconnected.

Some people are full of faith, some are full of wisdom. One must practise the virtue inherent within oneself, then, together with that, all the other virtues will come. But till they come into balance, one must not stop one's practice. When all the virtues come into balance, then there is enlightenment.

**Q.** Do virtues remove obstacles?

**A.** If by 'virtues', you mean good character, they are able to remove some obstacles. However, even a man of good character may have anger, greed, and pride within him at times. They are obstacles which stand in the way of one's spiritual development. So to remove such obstacles, one should develop concentration and introspection.

**Q.** What would be your advice to someone who lacks patience?

**A.** Let him try to be aware of his own nature. This will produce patience within himself.



**Q.** How can one develop humility?

**A.** When one understands that one is not perfect, then one may have humility.

### *Obstacles*

**Q.** What are the obstacles that prevent the flame within from blazing?

**A.** Unmindfulness, ignorance, and attachment to worldliness.

**Q.** *Samskaras* seem so difficult to root out. How can we speed up that process?

**A.** Be always mindful and full of awareness of where you proceed.

**Q.** When distractions come in meditation, how can we concentrate the mind?

**A.** One must be mindful when practising meditation. Be attentive always. Otherwise distractions crop up.

**Q.** But when the mind is already restless, how can we calm it?

**A.** If one is mindful, one knows when one's mind is distracted and restless. Then one must with effort draw back the mind from external objects and fix it on the object of meditation. The meditation on one's breath, called the *anapana-sati* meditation, is a prominent method of keeping one's mind from becoming restless.

**Q.** Do you approve of breathing exercises?

**A.** Not as a physical exercise, but as a practice of meditation. This system has been given in detail in many discourses of the Buddha and in commentaries on those discourses. In brief, you should not make an effort to breathe in or out, but just let the breath go in and out as usual. What you must do is watch it and be mindful. As you watch it, you must fix your mind on the place where the breath touches the face—either the tip of the nose or the upper lip. The breath of a long-nosed person touches the

tip of his nose, while that of a short-nosed person touches his upper lip. Then you have to catch that spot mentally. In the beginning you can only feel it hazily. A similar system is mentioned, I suppose, in the *Yoga-Vasishta*.

**Q.** How can we develop self-mastery enough to get a grip over *samskaras* that are bubbling up within before they rise to the surface and become manifest?

**A.** First, one has to develop wholesome qualities and thus suppress their opposite unwholesome counterparts from bubbling up. Keeping precepts and developing concentration will accomplish this. Then one must develop insight to fully realize one's whole nature. When insight develops, *samskaras* will be attenuated gradually.

When full realization dawns within oneself, ignorance, the root cause of all *samskaras*, is dispelled, as is darkness before sunlight. This is full enlightenment.

### *Spiritualizing Our Everyday Life*

**Q.** How can we increase the quality of our work so that obstacles such as pride and dejection do not arise?

**A.** The easiest way is to read the lives of the saints and to follow their example. Then if you keep in mind that the purpose of religious life is to unselfishly serve oneself as well as others, then this will not be a problem.

**Q.** For some aspirants, the long-range goal is God-realization; but the short-term goal is the expansion of consciousness. How can we expand our consciousness in our everyday lives?

**A.** Expansion means cutting off the limitation. The limitation is belief in individuality, the limited 'I'-concept. If you cut that off, then there is expansion.

**Q.** How can we gain mastery of anger,

especially at the moment of anger? When somebody insults you, what mental process do you go through?

A. The baby in the mother's lap may sometimes strike the mother or bite her hand, but the mother doesn't get angry. She knows that the baby has not grown enough to understand the mother's value. Similarly, an aspirant who has developed his spiritual side regards another's insults as due to childishness or ignorance. Therefore he doesn't get angry, but pities the one who insults.

According to Vedanta, there is no place where God is not. So God dwells within the insulting man, just as He dwells within him who is insulted. Thus God insults God. Thus there is no reason to get angry.

According to Vedanta, the world is an illusion. So that insult is a part of the illusion.

As for the Buddhist, he has many ways he can regard the insulter in order to control himself. A well-trained Buddhist sees no person that insults, nor one that is insulted. Why? Ultimately a man is but a collection of ever-changing psycho-physical states. Discriminate: if there is an enemy who hurts you, take revenge. But first you must find out who is the real enemy. Suppose somebody beats you, is his hand the enemy? No. The body doesn't work unless the mind orders it. But every mind is not your enemy—only the moment you get angry. When anger arises in the mind, then the mind gets disturbed and is corrupted at that moment. So the real enemy is anger—not the mind. How then to kill this enemy? If you beat him,

you nurse his anger. If you show your kindness, then his anger is appeased. That is why Lord Buddha said: 'Conquer anger by kindness.'

If one has trained one's mind along such lines—to remain unmoved at whatever happens—anger is not a problem.

Q. But isn't it the ego that gets disturbed?

A. Yes. It is the ego that both disturbs and gets disturbed.

Q. Every time we control ourselves, do we get one step closer to Nirvana?

A. Yes. But if you go a little forward, but do not remain mindful, you may slip farther and farther away from Nirvana.

Lord Buddha gave the following instruction that every Buddhist monk should remember:

Forbearing patience is the highest ascetic practice.

Nirvana is the Supreme Goal; so the Buddhas teach:

One who harms others is not a monk.

Nor is he a recluse who maltreats others.

Don't insult; don't harm; restrain according to the Fundamental Moral Code; be moderate in food; live in a secluded abode; develop concentration of mind.

This is the advice of all Buddhas. □

Men do not mirror themselves in running water—they mirror themselves in still water. Only what is still can still the stillness of other things.

—*Taoism*. Chuang, Tzu 5



# A Sister's Tribute to 'A Mission to the World'

(A Centennial Celebration of the Vedanta Society of New York—  
Swami Vivekananda's First Mission to the West)

ANANDA

'Sisters and Brothers of America'—these were the first words spoken by Swami Vivekananda at the First Parliament of World Religions. And with these words he heralded a century of Vedanta in America and, for that matter, to the world at large<sup>1</sup>. The thundering applause that followed these words that memorable day, 11 September 1893, in the Hall of Columbus at the Chicago Art Institute was an immediate recognition by the American public of a sense of brotherhood: a sense of brotherhood that was spontaneously triggered by Swami Vivekananda and continues to do so unabated to this day, a hundred years after. In an almost uncanny historical coincidence, as it were, it is indeed to a sister's love and a brother's labour, here in America, where he first sounded the clarion call of human brotherhood, that we are indebted for a grand and beautiful programme celebrating Vivekananda's 'Mission to the World'.

On 16 October 1994, at exactly 3 PM, Conductor Judith Clurman with some seventy performers of the New York Concert Singers and Orchestra took her position on stage in the Alice Tully Concert Hall of the world-famous Lincoln Centre in Manhattan, New York. With a wave of her hand

forty voices rang out in chorus across the expanse of the auditorium. Some four hundred guests attending this magnificent programme sat back to enjoy and celebrate an ensemble of music and words under the banner 'A Mission to the world'. Staged under the auspices of the Vedanta Society of New York, 'A Mission to the World' was an Oratorio Trilogy—a poetical and musical rendering of the principal events in the life of Swami Vivekananda during the two-year period from December 1892 to November 1894.

Among the events providing the setting for celebrating this period in the history of the life of Swami Vivekananda, there are two that are historically relevant to the movement as a whole. The first is more widely known and has been celebrated all over the world throughout the year of 1993, as the centenary celebration of the first Parliament of World Religions held in Chicago in September 1893. This was the debut of Vivekananda-Vedanta in the modern world where Swami Vivekananda first appeared in person to give his 'message to the West'

The second significant event was at the culmination of the first two years of his intense effort and work in America. In the November of 1894 he founded the first Vedanta Centre in the West. This was a hallmark event in the life of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Vedanta movement as a whole. It all began here in New York.

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\* The full text of the Oratorio Trilogy, 'A Mission to the World', follows this article. See p. 150 under NEWS AND REPORTS for further information.

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 16th ed., Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta 1984; vol. 1, p. 3.



The New York Vedanta Society, established in the autumn of 1894, has been celebrating its centennial through an ambitious set of programmes spread out over the year—a series of centennial lectures by guest speakers, a special programme by young children featuring a drama on the life of Vivekananda, and the release of several centennial publications. But the hallmark event was the programme at the Alice Tully Hall of the Lincoln Centre.

'New York is a grand and good place', Vivekananda once wrote<sup>2</sup>. As if in an echo of his very words, the celebration of the centennial of the Vedanta Society of New York was indeed 'grand'. **Staged at an approximate cost of one hundred thousand dollars**, the programme was one of the most spectacular celebrations among the worldwide series of events held to mark the first century of Vivekananda in America. Yet **perhaps to the devotee what made the programme also 'good' was the fact that the entire cost of the programme was a gift of love from a sister to a brother!**

As devotees are well aware, many of the significant events of the Vivekananda movement have been a result of inspired giving from fellow Americans. From the construction of the headquarters of the movement at Belur (India), to the founding and establishing of the numerous Vedanta Centres and Society headquarters across the world, inspired giving has been the primary source of funding. In the case of the Vedanta Society of New York, for example, the present building premises resulted from a sizable gift from Miss Mary Morton, the daughter of Levi Morton, an ex-Governor of the State of New York who had served as Vice President of the United States of America during the term of President Benjamin Harrison (1888–1892).

While in magnitude the present gift to fund the centennial celebration becomes one of the largest of its kind in the history of the Vedanta movement as it unfolded at the New York Vedanta Center, in spirit it remains a remarkable coincidence that a 'sister and a brother of America' should literally be the primary instrument for the celebration of the centenary of Universal brotherhood that Swamiji lived and worked for. It was a gift from a sister, a gift of love and affection to celebrate a brother's lifetime dedication to composing music based on Vivekananda and his Vedantic Message.

Josephine Schlenck Gumbiner, the 'sister', is a long-time resident and community volunteer in Long Beach, California. There she has made a life-long commitment to addressing the needs of women and children. A retired social worker, Josephine has been recognized with the 1989 Woman of the Year Award from YWCA; a 1991 Individual Award from the Long Beach Child Care Coalition, a 1991 and 1992 Buddy Award from the Long Beach Children's Museum and the 1992 Sommelier d'Esprit from the Long Beach Legal Aid Foundation along with the Distinguished Arts Philanthropist Award from the Public Corporation of the Arts in 1983. Most recently she has been honoured with the Humanitarian Award by the National Conference of Christians and Jews. In 1989, Josephine established a Foundation that since 1990 gifted a total of 150 grants totaling a sum of 1.5 million dollars.

Composer John Schlenck, 'the brother', was born in Indianapolis in 1936 and graduated from the Eastman School of Music in 1957. A resident member of the Vedanta Society of New York, he has been Director of Music at the Society since 1961.

John Schlenck dedicated his life to serving the ideals of Vivekananda and his mis-

2. *Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 319.



sion through music. Composing music set to Vedantic texts and themes, he has composed many songs and a number of large works with religious texts, including *Raise the Self by the Self: A Cantata on the Bhagavad Gita*, and *The Bard and Prophet: Journey to Freedom*, set to poetry of Walt Whitman and Swami Vivekananda. His Cantata *The Illumined Self*, with Classical Vedantic texts, was performed in San Francisco in 1986, as part of the Vedanta Society of Northern California's sesquicentennial celebration of the birth of Sri Ramakrishna. His recently performed works include *Seek the Eternal: An Interfaith Cantata Celebrating the Spiritual Life*, performed at the Parliament of World's Religions in Chicago 1993, and the Cantata, *The Universal Gospel*, performed at the Conference on Global religions at Queen's College, New York, in 1994.

Although Josephine and John spent

most of their life separated by practically a continent, at opposite coasts of the United States, the affection and love of the sister ever remained glowing. Josephine never ceased to be moved by her 'little brother's' dedication to a lifetime of music. Even as a child, John's talents at the piano left an indelible impression on Josephine and their other siblings. When John had finished composing his Oratorio Trilogy, *A Mission to the World*, it did not take Josephine a moment's hesitation to offer the gift of \$1,00,000 to stage the programme as part of the Vedanta Society's centennial celebration. The rest is history. A more than fitting tribute to the spirit of brotherhood that Vivekananda so championed, lived, and worked for.

We, the devotees and followers of the Vivekananda movement, a century after, have no hesitation in saluting once more *New York is a grand and good place!* □

After every happiness comes misery; they may be far apart or near. The more advanced the soul, the more quickly does one follow the other. *What we want is neither happiness nor misery.* Both make us forget our true nature; both are chains—one iron, one gold; behind both is the Atman, who knows neither happiness nor misery. These are *states* and states must ever change; but the nature of the Soul is bliss, peace, unchanging. We have not to get it, we have it; only wash away the dross and see it.

Stand upon the Self, then only can we truly love the world. Take a very, very high stand; knowing our universal nature, we must look with perfect calmness upon all the *panorama* of the world. It is but baby's play, and we know that, so cannot be disturbed by it. If the mind is pleased with praise, it will be displeased with blame. All pleasures of the senses or even of the mind are evanescent; but within ourselves is the one true unrelated pleasure, dependent upon nothing. It is perfectly free, it is bliss. *The more our bliss is within, the more spiritual we are.* The pleasure of the Self is what the world calls religion.

The internal universe, the *real*, is infinitely greater than the external, which is only a shadowy projection of the true one. This world is neither true nor untrue, it is the shadow of truth. "Imagination is the gilded shadow of truth", says the poet.

—'Inspired Talks', *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 7, p. 11

# A Mission to the World

An Oratorio Trilogy for Chorus and Orchestra, Vocal Quartet and Narrators

Music by John Schlenck

Text by Erik Johns, with quotations from Swami Vivekananda

*Dedicated to the founding of the first Vedanta Society, New York, autumn 1894, the trilogy celebrates Vivekananda's coming to the U.S.A., his renown at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, his twin messages of inter-religious harmony and the divine potential of humankind, and his founding of the Vedanta Society. The three segments are entitled, Chicago—September 11, 1893, The Bell That Told, and Epistles—1893-1894.*

## I. CHICAGO—SEPTEMBER 11, 1893

Narrator 1: His heart was fluttering,  
His tongue nearly dried up.  
At last he came to the rostrum  
And, bowing to the Goddess of Wisdom, began to speak:  
'Sisters and Brothers of America!'

There he stood;  
There Vivekananda stood  
In the Great Hall, Art Institute of Chicago,  
September 11, 1893.  
There he stood as thousands rising to their feet  
Proclaimed his victory!

Soparno  
solo: But for him the clapping had become  
A playful lapping of waves upon a beach.  
There in Kanyakumari he stood,  
His piercing eyes staring out to sea,  
Searching the far horizon  
For the meaning of his mission.

Chorus: The temple bells still echoed in his mind,  
And the incense to the Blissful Mother there  
Filled his nostrils. He seemed to hear her  
Calling from the sea.

Soparno  
solo: 'Have no fear, my son.  
Have no fear. Follow me.'

Chorus: And he threw himself  
Into the shark-infested waves



That tossed about him,  
His strong arms pummeling the sea.

Narrator 1: He swam with all his strength  
Until he reached a rocky isle  
That marked the point  
Southern-most in all of India.

Soprano  
solo: 'Have no fear, my son. Follow me.'

Chorus: The temple bells still echoed in his mind,  
And the incense to the Blissful Mother there  
Filled his nostrils.

Narrator 1: And climbing out of those dark waters,  
He knew he was at the end of that long journey  
That had taken him throughout his native land.  
But his heart could not rest.  
He must know his destiny.

Soprano &  
Tenor duet: Then as he sat on that rocky isle,  
The voices of his people came to him  
As they had done in the long years  
Of his holy pilgrimage.

Chorus: We are India.  
We are the multitudes whom you have sought.  
Let our voices resound within you,  
For you have heard us crying out.

Bass solo: Deep in meditation he heard...

Tenor &  
Bass duet: But he had also heard a summons from the West.

Quartet: The peoples of the world cried out to him  
Though they had not been seen.

Narrator 1: And then appeared the face  
Of Bhaskara Setupati, Raja of Ramnad,  
And said to him:

Narrator 2: 'You must go, Swamiji,  
You who have seen the destitution of our people,  
You must go for their sakes, for the love of all of us—

For those who fall into step with the masters of our tyranny,  
 And for those who are trampled underfoot  
 By those same masters.  
 Save us, O Sannyasin!  
 Go to America and find our freedom!'

Chorus: We are India.  
 We are the multitudes whom you have sought.  
 Let our voices resound within you,  
 For you have heard us crying out  
 From distant Almora to Kanyakumari,  
 From the great cities of Madras and Bangalore,  
 Bombay and Madurai,  
 From the timeless villages where grim lives  
 Ebb away in squalor and ignorance,  
 And in our eyes, no sense of who we are,  
 No sense that we descend from rishis of a noble age—  
 Those Vedic seers who shook the earth  
 With visionary thunder!  
 Resound, resound,  
 Let our voices resound within you, O Sannyasin.  
 For we are India:  
 We are the multitudes whom you have sought.  
 Do not forget us.

Bass solo: And in his heart he felt their pain  
 And thought to himself,  
 Let me stay with them to ease their sorrows.

Chorus: And yet, his mind perceived a wider destiny in store.  
 Narrator 1: Thus, the words of the Prime Minister of Porbandar,  
 The Pundit Shankar Pandurang, flashed before him...

Narrator 2: 'Swamiji, I fear you cannot do much to rouse us here.  
 Few will care, or dare appreciate your words.  
 Go there, America.  
 They will understand you and your work.  
 They will be enlightened by the thoughts you have expressed. Do not  
 stay here.  
 Go, Swamiji, go into the West.'

Narrator 1: What boundless energy coursed through the man,  
 Searching for the channel it might fulfil.  
 The waters splashed upon the rocks,  
 And high waves crashed as, deep in meditation,  
 Waves of tumult dashed against an inner shore.  
 No more the solitary sadhu life...



Soprano and  
Tenor duet: For he could hear their voices...

Chorus : We are India...

Soprano and  
Tenor duet: ...he could hear their voices.

Chorus: We are the multitudes whom you have sought.  
Let our voices resound within you,  
For you have heard us crying out.  
Do not forget us, O Sannyasin.

Soprano &  
Alto duet: And he had heard their voices.

Tenor &  
Bass duet: Sarada Devi's voice was clear...

Soprano  
solo: 'It is the Master's wish, my son.'

Alto, Tenor &  
Bass trio: And in a dream did Ramakrishna come,

Quartet: ...and walked into the sea,  
Then turned, and pointing West,  
With one brief word, said, 'Go.'

Chorus: The hero rose up from his seat upon that rock.  
His heart was stilled.  
The waves yet beat upon the stone  
But he was not alone upon that rock.  
The voices of countrymen and God  
Were there with him that fateful day  
And were his strength as they had ever been.

Narrator 1: There he stood.  
There Vivekananda stood in the Great hall,  
Art Institute of Chicago,  
September 11, 1893.

Chorus: There he stood as thousands  
Rising to their feet  
Proclaimed his victory!  
His work.

His mission to the world.  
He had begun.

## II. THE BELL THAT TOLLED

### *1. All streams mingle their water in the sea*

Chorus: "As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which people take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee."

Quartet: "Whosoever comes to me through whatsoever form, I reach him: all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me."

Narrator: 'Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendent, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth.

Chorus: 'They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilization, and sent whole nations to despair.'

'We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true.'

Chorus: 'Whosoever comes to Me through whatsoever form, I reach him: all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me.'

Narrator: 'I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honor of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal.'

Chorus: "As the different streams all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which people take all lead to Thee."

### *2. Him the sword cannot pierce*

Narrator: 'Here I stand and if I shut my eyes, and try to conceive my existence, 'I', 'I', 'I' what is the idea before me? The idea of a body. Am I, then, nothing but a combination of material substances? The Vedaś declare,

Chorus: "'No." I am a spirit living in a body. I am not the body. The body will die, but I shall not die.'

Narrator: 'The Hindu believes that he is a spirit.



Chorus: 'Him the sword cannot pierce—him the fire cannot burn—him the water cannot melt—him the air cannot dry. We are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth—sinners! It is a sin to call a man so; it is standing libel on human nature. Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal. Ye are not matter, ye are not bodies; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter. You are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal.'

### *3. He is the one beloved*

Narrator: 'The Vedas proclaim not a dreadful combination of unforgiving laws, not an endless prison of cause and effect, but at the head of all these laws, in and through every particle...stands One "by whose command the wind blows, the fire burns, the clouds rain, and death stalks upon the earth."

Soprano solo: 'And what is his nature?

Quartet: 'He is everywhere, the pure and formless One, the Almighty, the All-merciful.

Chorus: "'Thou art our father, Thou art our mother, Thou art our beloved friend. Thou art the source of all strength; give us strength. Thou art He that beareth the burdens of the universe; help me bear the little burden of this life."

Soprano and  
Alto duet: 'And how to worship Him?

Chorus: "'He is the one beloved, dearer than any thing in this or the next life."

Soprano and  
Tenor duet: "'Lord, I do not want wealth or children or learning. If it be Thy will, I shall go from birth to birth; but grant...that I may love Thee without hope of reward—love unselfishly for love's sake."

Chorus: "'Behold...the Himalayas, how grand and beautiful they are..."

Soprano and  
Tenor duet: "'I love them. They do not give me anything, but my nature is to love the grand, the beautiful, therefore I love them." In the same way, I love the Lord.

Quartet: 'He is the source of all beauty...all sublimity.

Chorus: 'He is the source of all beauty...all sublimity.

Quartet: 'He is the only object to be loved; my nature is to love Him, and therefore I love.

Chorus: 'I do not pray for anything; I do not ask for anything. let Him place Me wherever He likes....I cannot trade in love.'

#### *4. We are to become divine*

Narrator: 'The whole world of religions is only a travelling, a coming up, of different men and women, through various conditions and circumstances, to the same goal. Every religion is only evolving a God out of the material man, and the same God is the inspirer of all of them. Idols or temples or churches or books are only the supports, the helps, of our spiritual childhood; but on and on we must progress. We are to become divine by realizing the divine.'

Chorus: 'Every soul is a young eagle soaring higher and higher, gathering more and more strength till it reaches the Glorious Sun...We are to become divine by realizing the divine. The soul is divine, only held in the bondage of matter. And this bondage can only fall off through the mercy of God.'

""Whosoever comes to Me through whatsoever form, I reach him.""

Quartet: 'The pure and the stainless see God, yea, even in this life.

Chorus: 'The pure and the stainless see God, yea, even in this life....then is all crookedness of the heart made straight. Then all doubt ceases. "Hear, ye children of immortal bliss! even ye that reside in higher spheres! I have found the Ancient One who is beyond all darkness, all delusion: knowing Him alone you shall be saved from death over again." Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal. The soul is divine. The pure and the stainless see God even in this life.'

### **III. EPISTLES 1893—1894**

Chorus: The great hall was empty.  
The cheering and applause a memory.  
The Parliament of Religions had been adjourned,  
And the speakers all gone home.

Quartet: But Vivekananda did not go;  
He had a mission to perform.  
The cries of the world had reached him  
There in Chicago.



And though his life's blood would be the offering,  
He was destined to hear those cries.

Narrator: For he had written, 20th August, 1893:

Tenor solo: 'Despair not, remember the Lord says in the Gita,

Chorus: "'To work you have the right but not to the result"...

Tenor solo: 'I am called by the Lord for this.  
I have been dragged through a whole life  
Of crosses and tortures—  
I have seen the nearest and dearest die...  
I have been ridiculed, distrusted  
And have suffered for my sympathy  
For the very men who scoff and scorn...  
This is the school of misery,  
Which is also the school for great souls and prophets,  
For the cultivation of sympathy, of patience,  
And, above all, of an indomitable iron will  
Which quakes not, even if the universe  
Be pulverized at our feet.'

Chorus: An iron will sustained him,  
He had mission to perform,  
The cries of the world had reached him there,  
And though his life's blood would be the offering,  
He was destined to hear those cries.  
And so, he went among the people  
And felt their longing.

Quartet: For he had written, Chicago, 2nd November, 1893:

Narrator: 'There is a curiosity in this nation  
Such as you meet with nowhere else.  
They want to know everything....  
I must remain in this country  
At least through the winter....  
The Lord will provide everything for me—  
Day by day I am feeling  
That the Lord is with me,  
And I am trying to follow His direction.  
His will be done—  
We will do great things for the world.'

Chorus: Great things for the world!  
The cold of that winter did not daunt him,  
Nor the slanders of his countrymen,

Nor the trials of his poverty,  
 Nor the magnitude of his task,  
 Nor any other obstacle in his path—  
 He had a mission to perform.

Quartet: For he had written to an afflicted friend, 1893:

Narrator: 'Waves may roll over the surface  
 And tempests rage, but deep down  
 There is the stratum of infinite calmness,  
 Infinite peace and infinite bliss....  
 It is during these moments...  
 When the heart is wrung  
 By hands which never stop  
 For the father's cries or the mother's wail,  
 When under the load of sorrow,  
 Dejection and despair  
 The world seems to be cut off  
 From under our feet, and when  
 The whole horizon seems to be  
 Nothing but an impenetrable sheet  
 Of misery and utter despair,  
 That the internal eyes open,  
 Light flashes all of a sudden,  
 The dream vanishes...  
 We come face to face with...  
 Existence.

Chorus: 'Then it is, the shackles that bind the soul...  
 Break for a time, and unfettered  
 The soul rises and rises until it reaches  
 The throne of the Lord,  
 "Where the wicked cease from troubling  
 And the weary are at rest.' Cease not...  
 To send up petitions day and night,  
 Cease not to say day and night,  
 THY WILL BE DONE."  
 By the will of God,  
 The shackles that had bound his soul  
 Were broken, and he became free,  
 And in that freedom was his power,  
 And in that power he was moved to action.

Quartet: For he had written, Chicago, 24th January, 1894:

Narrator: 'Caste or no caste,  
 Creed or no creed,



Any man, or class or caste  
 Or nation, or institution  
 Which bars the power of free thought  
 And action of an individual—  
 ...So long as that power does not injure others—  
 Is devilish and must go down.  
 'My whole ambition in life  
 Is to set in motion a machinery  
 Which will bring noble ideas  
 To the door of everybody  
 And then, let men and women  
 Settle their own fate.  
 Let them know what our forefathers  
 And other nations have thought  
 On the most momentous  
 Questions of life.  
 Let them see  
 What others are doing now,  
 And then decide.

'We are to put the chemicals together;  
 The crystallization will be done  
 By nature according to her laws.  
 Work hard, be steady,  
 And have faith in the Lord.'

Quartet: The crystallization of nature  
 According to her laws....  
 A plan of action grew within him,  
 With faith and will  
 The bedrock of his vision.

For he had written, New York, 11th July, 1894:

Narrator: 'Last year I only sowed the seeds;  
 This year I mean to reap....  
 The sheer power of Will  
 Will do everything....  
 You must organize a society  
 Which should regularly meet....  
 The faculty of organization  
 Is entirely absent in our nature,  
 But this has to be infused.  
 The great secret is absence of jealousy....  
 Remember, the only sign of life  
 Is motion and growth.'

Chorus: It was the summer of 1894.  
The moments of his preparation  
Were coming to an end.  
The time to act had come—  
But where or how to plant the seed  
That is might grow?

Quartet: He had written from Greenacre, 29th June, 1894:

Narrator: 'America...is the best field in the world  
To carry on any idea,  
So I do not think  
Of leaving America soon.'

Quartet: And then he wrote from Annisquam, 20th July, 1894:

Narrator: 'I will go to New York....  
The New Yorkers are slow,  
But when they get hold of anything,  
They do it with a mortal grip.  
Most probably I will make New York  
My center for the next winter.'

Chorus: Unfolding now within him  
The scope of his mission  
Which he had not foreseen,  
And mirrored in his letters,  
Projections of his mind  
Could chart the work before him  
And would not give him rest.

Quartet: The solitary monk,  
Wandering from place to place,  
With no cares for the world—  
That life for him was over—  
A new life had begun.

Chorus: He wrote, U.S.A., 31st August, 1894:

Narrator: 'Now organize a little society.  
You will have to take charge  
Of the whole movement,  
Not as a leader, but as a servant.  
Next winter [I] will go  
About this country organizing societies.  
This is a great field of work....



'The greatest difficulty with me  
Is to keep or even touch money....  
Organize a society to take charge  
Of the practical and pecuniary part of it—  
I have friends here who take care  
Of all my monetary concerns.  
Do you see? It will be  
A wonderful relief to me....'

Chorus: The summer was over,  
And as he had planned,  
Vivekananda returned to New York

Quartet: And wrote, 21st September, 1894:

Narrator: 'I am going to live  
For a few months in New York.  
That city is the head, hand  
And purse of the country.  
The New York people  
Are very open.  
I will see what can be done there....  
It will take a long time  
For Westerners to understand  
The higher spirituality.'

Chorus: Though good friends rallied round him,  
The life he found in that unyielding city  
Was a hard life, and in his heart  
The quiet monk cried out,  
But the suffering of the world  
Was not to give him rest.

Quartet: And he wrote, Washington, 27th October, 1894:

Narrator: 'I am not an organizer.  
My nature tends toward  
Scholarship and meditation.  
I think I have worked enough,  
Now I want rest  
And to teach a little to those  
That have come to me from my Gurudeva....

Soprano, Alto

& Bass trio: 'I do not believe in a God or religion  
Which cannot wipe away the widow's tears  
Or bring a piece of bread

To the orphan's mouth.  
 However sublime the theories,  
 However well-spun the philosophy—  
 I do not call it religion  
 So long as it is confined  
 To books and dogmas.'

Chorus: *(repeat 'I do not believe....books and dogmas')*

'The eye is in the forehead  
 And not in the back.  
 Move forward and carry into practice  
 That which you are very proud  
 To call your religion,

Quartet: 'And God bless you!'  
 And so he set about to organize his work  
 With all the pain and heartache it entailed—  
 A band of devotees who for his sake,  
 Followed him, some thrived and others failed—  
 Yet, he persisted. Effort and God's grace,  
 Both combined to make his message known,  
 And those who heard and saw him face to face  
 Knew that he had made the world his own.

Chorus: And those who heard and saw him face to face  
 Knew that he had made the world his own.

Quartet: For he had written, 30th November, 1894:

Narrator: 'Now go to work for the organization.  
 I have already started one in New York,  
 And the Vice-President will soon write to you.  
 Keep correspondence with them.  
 Soon I hope to get up a few  
 In other places.  
 We must organize our forces,  
 Not to make a sect, not on religious matters,  
 But on the secular business part of it.'

Quartet: Thus began from this small step  
 A leap into a future space  
 Where all humanity might keep  
 His promise for the human race.

Chorus: For with his thunder, through his pain,  
 He stepped upon the earth's great stage



And, as his Master had ordained,  
Gave witness to a golden age.

Quartet: For he had written,

Chorus: Vivekananda had written, U.S.A., 1894:

Narrator: 'If you are really my children,  
You will fear nothing,  
You will be like lions.  
We must rouse India  
And the whole world—  
No cowardice. I will take no nay....  
You must succeed.  
My prayers and benedictions  
Follow every step you take.  
Work in harmony.  
Be patient with everybody.  
Everyone has my love.  
I am watching you.  
Onward! Onward!  
This is just the beginning.'

Chorus: (*repeat 'Thus began... golden age.'*)

'The soul is divine.  
The pure and the stainless see God  
Even in this life, yea, even in this life.'



Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.  
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.  
It is our light, not our darkness, that most frighten us.  
We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?  
Actually, who are you not to be?  
You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world.  
There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel  
insecure around you.  
We are born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.  
It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone.  
And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people  
permission to do the same.  
As we are liberated from our fear, our presence automatically liberates others.  
—Nelson Mandela, 1994 Inaugural Speech

# Cognitive Forces

Richard Chambers Prescott

*A soul-stirring article on how the state of our mind—and not the impressions created by that something outside called 'world'—determines what and how we perceive. So, for a more cheerful world, we should all strive to cultivate a state of mind suffused with love, empathy, a desire to give and share.*

*Mr. Prescott, we are sure, is well known to you, for in the past too he has contributed thoughtful articles to the PB.*

The mind is like an ice block most of the time, but when consciousness is cognitively awakened, that very same mind, becomes like water vapor set free. Our mind consciousness is indeed similar to water. If you put water in a bowl, it takes the shape of the bowl; if you place water in a cup, it takes the shape of a cup. Essentially, the water is formless and free, yet simultaneously very versatile, assuming any shape.

Sometimes, when I need to think things out, I go to an old tree stump and sit there for awhile. Once, I went there when I was really depressed and now whenever I arrived at this place, the same wave of depression goes through me. This is an example of negative cognitive distortion. The tree stump doesn't feel either way about it. The feeling is my association and projection with the current of thought in my mind.

When I watch old *Twin Peaks* episodes, after a while the world around me has that eerie, strange kind of funny mystery about it—that *Twin Peak*-ish atmosphere. Anyway, the world is just what it is. It is the cognitive forces in my own mind that give it the bend of the television show. What comes to my mind focuses my mind like a lens and that is how the world then appears.

Of course, when the memory or thought of some very happy and har-

monious feeling moves through my own personal cognitive forces, well then, no matter what the world is actually like, it then appears as a happy and joyous place to me. One thing reminds us of another, like dominoes knocking each other over, for memories are all connected to each other through the medium of consciousness. Consciousness is the primary cognitive force.

Yet, in the flow of time, it becomes a matter of sheer self acceptance, a cognitive acceptance of self, over and above all and any happy or depressive, positive or negative, blissful or wrathful images within the mindset. The mind always has both, but the consciousness out of which the vagaries of cognitive appearances arise is over and above the parallels that push and pull us toward or away from self-acceptance.

It is a matter of using the cognitive forces we are endowed with to see and create only what is good, grand, and wonderful. One reduces the cognitive enumerations of experiences back into oneness and self-acceptance, or not two-ness, or not three-ness, nor any multiple. One goes back to the simplest formula, immediate and very direct recognition. The meeting with self. It can be done. I may do it, and you may do it.

Cognitive forces are like natural magic. If I start talking to you about lemons and tell



you how I am taking a knife and slicing the lemon, squeezing its juices over ice, while some of the juices are dripping over the side of the glass, the sharp citrus tang is hitting my nostrils. Pretty soon, my mouth and your mouth begins to water. The cognitive images creates the psychosomatic effect, the memory of tasting lemons and the thirst and watering in the mouth. All things are like this and as individuals we may create what we want to create—in life, relations, and in our own conscious minds. So it seems.

The King of Yogas (Raja Yoga) takes this to the limit, saying that we may even gain powers over mind and matter such as healing, knowing distant things, remembering past lives, comprehending the matrix of future space-time, so many descriptions of possibilities are given. It seems quite incredible, actually. I would be happy to get only one of these powers, that *ātmārāma*, the joyful pleasure of the true spiritual self. Being happy.

Really there are so many untapped potentials sleeping in the human mind. For example, to me and I'm sure to you, it is extremely interesting to realize that some people who have multiple personality disorder, may in one personality manifest psychosomatically a diabetic problem in their body, but in another personality there is no diabetes at all. Even though this realization comes out of a sad and distressed disorder, the revelation as to human potential and the power of cognitive forces is demonstrated in such a way as to severely shake our preconceptions over what the mind may do to us.

I can clearly see and realize from this amazing example that the curse and the cure come out of the same mind as consciousness itself. Even though the secondary phenomenal personalities may regard themselves as different from each other, the conscious-

ness of the person does in fact know the different personalities as an integrated whole self—that being the cure of this disorder.

It is a matter of benevolent grace towards oneself and others. Another scientific fact is that if you are in a mood—say sad or distressed or whatever—and you begin to force a smile on your face and keep it there for a short time, well, pretty soon the brain begins to secrete those happy juices, the biochemicals your body was familiar with when you were really happy. Before you know it, you actually feel happy. This is the secret of life to me. Just force a smile on your face and soon the joyous mysteries of the great universe begin to unfold. Happiness is the central thing we all want anyway.

Here is something else I experienced recently. On the same day, a swami friend of mine and another dear friend who is a doctor, both touched me with their hand on my hand and on my shoulder. Unknowingly, I imagine, they said more to me and helped me more than a thousand words could do. Their sympathetic, emphatic, loving fondness meant so much to me, to be given such regard by people I hold in regard.

I began to think about this deeply. Is what was expressed in those simple gestures so absent in my life that the touch of their hands mean so much to me? Is my life so empty of affection? Could the primary problem of human existence be this absence of love, so that it seems that almost every act in body and mind becomes the neurotic need to compensate for this voidness of true feeling? Yes.

What a simple but meaningful realization this was for me. The cognitive force of affection, empathy, and love cannot be expressed in words, yet need be expressed throughout everybody's lives. So empty we



really are of this tender direct emotion which heals us all of our sorrows and disappointments. Earlier, I said that consciousness is the primary cognitive force. I think I'm wrong. Love is the primary cognitive force, coming up into life without effort.

I don't think there are any real limits, only imagined ones, to the new ways, models, and patterns of thinking and feeling. We create our own cognitive self-being by our own self-statement of what we are. It

As it is said, it is so much easier to enhance and increase what is positive rather than trying to push down and decrease the negative. The positive naturally increases with a little encouragement and then the negative diminishes of its own accord without the effort to resist.

Life is so short, there is no time to waste, for one day we wake up from this dream. In the movie, *Being There*, the last line in the last scene when Peter Sellers is walking on water

*As it is said, it is so much easier to enhance and increase what is positive rather than trying to push down and decrease the negative. The positive naturally increases with a little encouragement and then the negative diminishes of its own accord without the effort to resist.*

is the power of inner dialogue. If you think you are free, you are free. If you think you are bound and stupid, well then, you are going to carry that around with you until you let yourself off the hook.

Your own power of well-being is your own. It is not in the hands of someone else. Though if you give it over or hand it over to someone else, regarding them as the source of your happy or sad responses, then you have transferred the power of your own well-being somewhere besides its central location, which is your own self state. Yet it can be quickly regained in an instant of recognition.

I heard a nice little story about a woman who, when she would hear people arguing or fighting, would go up to them and say, 'Roses, roses, roses.' She'd say it over and over until the people would stop their bickering and ask, 'What are you saying?' 'Roses, roses. They smell so wonderful. They look so beautiful.' She'd continue and the stressed-out situation would diffuse, another natural miracle of what these cognitive forces may mean for us.

is, 'Life is a state of mind.' Truer words have never been spoken. I have not walked on water, but with a little help from each other, maybe we can jump over the puddles together. Blessed be.

True empathy expresses the great sentiment, even to those persons, objects, and events that obstruct you or even hate you. It is the true achievement of real humanity and universal help to give, show, feel, express the great emotion without the slightest hesitation even in the face of tremendous challenge. Yet never lose touch with the source of the great sentiment, or never yield to the resistance that fears the current of the great emotion, for that fear is the only obstruction. □

You must try to combine in your life immense idealism with immense practicality.

—Swami Vivekananda



# The Nagarjuna Experience

K.S. RAJU

*The following presentation was made by Mr. K.S. Raju, Chairman of the Nagarjuna Group, at the Conference on 'Recreating Business in a Transforming Society', jointly sponsored by The World Business Academy and the International Labour Organization at Geneva on 23rd September 1994.*

*Mr. Raju gives a brief account of the founding of the Nagarjuna Group by his father, the late K. V. K. Raju (KVK), whose dedication to the Indian spiritual ideals has guided the firm in its extensive business and social activities. He then describes this unique business-social enterprise.*

I feel deeply honoured to have been asked to present the humble role played by the Nagarjuna Group in the great unfolding scene of India's economic and social development. By right, this presentation should have been made by my father and founder of the Nagarjuna Group, K. V. K. Raju, popularly known as KVK. His untimely demise in June '93, has left a deep void in

our Organization which is very difficult to fill.

I would like to present the Nagarjuna Experience through the six themes shown in the Table below. I would like to submit that these are the distinctive features which differentiate Nagarjuna from other business organizations.

TABLE 1.

1. FOSTERING ENTREPRENEURSHIP
2. MISSION: SERVING SOCIETY THROUGH INDUSTRY  
More than a Corporate Mission, a Philosophy
3. CONTRIBUTION TO ECOLOGY  
Adding to, not Take Away from the Planet
4. LEADERSHIP BASED ON VALUES  
Alignment of Corporate and Individual Values
5. COMBINING SPIRITUALITY AND MANAGEMENT  
Concept of Applied Spirituality
6. RECREATING NAGARJUNA IN THE EMERGING GLOBAL SCENARIO  
Where 'the Rubber meets the Road'; the Challenges, the Opportunities and the New Vision of the Nagarjuna Group

## 1. FOSTERING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

After acquiring two degrees in science and Engineering in India, my father went to

the U.S.A. to pursue higher studies at Michigan state University and the University of Minnesota in Mechanical and

Industrial Engineering. His strong academic grounding in Technology shaped his career to a great extent. When he started his first industrial venture in 1974 with the setting up of Nagarjuna Steels Ltd., now known as NSL, Ltd., he induced outstanding technocrats and professional managers to join him. Some of these people were later encouraged and supported by KVK to start industries on their own.

What I am going to talk about is a unique experiment for the promotion of entrepreneurship in independent India. Traditionally Indian industries were dominated by entrepreneurs from the trading class who had a short-term outlook. Because of lack of capital, very few educated and qualified professionals started their own business.

By virtue of his unique approach to business, my father started a new movement in Indian industry—that of technocrats and professional managers, breaking away from their traditional roles to assume responsibility for promotion of industry and enlargement of employment opportunity especially in under-developed regions of the country. He became a role model for a whole new generation of technocrat entrepreneurs who were not from traditional business families. He encouraged and provided capital, good will, and infrastructure to several of his best managers and associates to start their own businesses. At last count, there were more than 40 entrepreneurs spawned by the Nagarjuna Group.

The basic task of management development in our Group is to encourage managers to think and act as entrepreneurs and to take risks. To give a recent example, a very young manager who was previously working as my Executive Assistant has taken up the challenge of setting up a project to manufac-

ture sugar in Vietnam. Although he does not have any previous experience of managing a business or entering into foreign collaboration, we have decided to give him a free hand to establish this project in a foreign country, mainly because of his zeal and dedication.

## 2. MISSION: SERVING SOCIETY THROUGH INDUSTRY

Since inception the mission of the Nagarjuna Group is to serve society through Industry. KVK sincerely believed that if an industry is to prosper it has to seek to create wealth for society.

My father was born in an ordinary family of agriculturists in a remote village on the East Coast of India. He grew up in the milieu of the Freedom Movement in which several people from his village had taken part. The clarion call to national independence given by Mahatma Gandhi made a deep and abiding impression on KVK. In his later career as an entrepreneur, he faithfully practised the concept of Trusteeship propounded by Gandhi.

The Management philosophy of the group is the outgrowth of the Trusteeship concept. We are the trustees of our stakeholders: Customers, Employees, Shareholders and the Community at large. It is therefore incumbent on us to aim for the best in all that we do.

Until recently quality has not been high on the agenda of Indian Industry because of various factors such as a protected economy, scarce capital and unemployment. It is only because of our strong sense of trusteeship that we have been able to hold on to our values even against the tide.

Table 2 shows our approach to Business Management:



TABLE 2.

- \* SELECTION OF THE WORLD'S BEST TECHNOLOGY
- \* SELECTION OF THE BEST EQUIPMENT
- \* SELECTION OF THE BEST MEN  
People as Human Beings, not as Resources
- \* ACHIEVING WORLD CLASS PRODUCTIVITY  
e.g. Our fertilizer plant has been consistently producing at 125% of the installed capacity along with an energy consumption rate which is the lowest among the fertilizer plants in India.
- \* TOTAL QUALITY AND EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE  
We have initiated action to obtain the ISO 9000 certification.

After working for 17 years as an Executive with British and American Multinational, of which the longest period of service was with Union Carbide, my father decided to break out on his own as an entrepreneur.

The main reason for his decision to break out on his own was the then restrictive policy of the Government with regard to the growth of Multinationals, coupled with the lack of adequate commitment of the latter to India. He was also fired with the idea of contributing his humble mite as an entrepreneur to the industrial development of the country. For what use is political freedom for which the previous generations had fought and sacrificed if it is not followed through with economic independence?

This same ideal enabled us to take up the challenge of setting up a giant fertilizer plant on the East Coast of India. The project, which was languishing since 1973, was entrusted to our Group by the State Government in 1984. How a small-sized group like ours was entrusted with such a huge project was explained by KVK:

We were awarded the fertilizer project because the Government had confidence in us as a Group committed to Industrial development. They were in search of a

Group like ours who could be totally committed to implementing the project despite a host of uncertainties.

A recent example of the same spirit is our approach to the sugar project in Vietnam. In planning for a plant with a capacity of 2500 TCD, we had two options:

- 1) To go for complete mechanization right from the stage of cane growing to sugar production, which would minimize labour input and assure quality of the product;
- 2) To go for a labour-intensive process of cane cultivation by involving 2000 farmers covering 10,000 hectares of land around the factory. In order to succeed, this would require provision of high quality inputs, extensive training and motivation of the farmers.

We chose the latter option even though it is more difficult because of our conviction that the society around us should grow along with our own growth.

### 3. CONTRIBUTION TO ECOLOGY

We have implemented a comprehensive environment plan in our Fertilizer Plant which has resulted in near ZERO pollution of Air and Water. Our investment in pollution

control equipment in the plant is close to 6% of the capital cost against the Fertilizer industry norm of 3 to 5%. We have an internalized pollution control system for water whereby all the water used in the plant is completely treated and recycled to the huge green belt around the factory. Emissions of pollutants into the air are negligible, less than 1/100th of the National Standards and much better than international standards as well.

The 665 acre Green Belt extending over a kilometer, with 2,00,000 trees, a number of large waterbodies with marine life, birds, and animals, is our humble tribute to our founder's vision and philosophy of Industry in harmony with nature. To quote KVK:

While laws and regulations are promulgated to control pollution, the fulfilment of this objective depends on the sense of social responsibility amongst those engaged in Industry. This responsibility extends much beyond the narrow confines of compliance with statutorily stipulated standards. Our aim is, and must be, to maintain ecological harmony that is Nature's invaluable, beautiful gift

to man.

The Ecological system is the outcome of the combined wisdom and experience of the country's best experts in such diverse disciplines as forestry, horticulture, soil chemistry, ornithology, landscaping, animal and aquatic life.

#### 4. LEADERSHIP BASED ON VALUES

We believe that the binding factor in our Group has been and continues to be the set of values emanating from our founder which have since percolated through the Organization. We are in the last two years, in the process of institutionalizing our founder's vision. Through a process of genuine participation at all levels, we have evolved a mission statement and a set of corporate values to which individual employees at all levels can relate. We have also adopted a business planning and performance management system based on our mission and values. The focus of the PMS is the development of all employees personally and professionally. We firmly believe that this is the only way the performance of the organization can significantly improve. The following table shows our Core Values:

**TABLE 3.**

- |    |            |                                                                                                                                     |
|----|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| a) | COMMITMENT | We are committed to teamwork and partnership with all our stakeholders.                                                             |
| b) | CONCERN    | We care for and are concerned for others in everything that we do.                                                                  |
| c) | INTEGRITY  | We will make continuous efforts to improve our depth of character and the integrity in our personal and professional relationships. |
| d) | QUALITY    | We are continually seeking to improve the ways of doing things.                                                                     |

We are aware of the enormous difficulties in actually practising these values in our day-to-day business situations. This

requires transformation at the individual, departmental and the company level. With the help of two internationally renowned



Management Consultants, a number of programmes have been conducted to clarify these values and to enable our people to integrate them into their day-to-day activities. Based on these values each of our divisions has evolved a *Code of Behaviour* which acts as an ethical measure with which our business decisions are evaluated.

Our managers are encouraged to take personal responsibility for achievement of results as well as for the way they are achieved—remembering always that a result achieved at the expense of our values and Code of Behaviour is an unacceptable result.

I would like to emphasize that we are not there completely yet, but are fully committed to make continuous improvement on an ongoing basis.

## 5. COMBINING SPIRITUALITY AND MANAGEMENT

In the next few years we are going to witness unprecedented changes in India, as global market forces make an impact upon our economy, technologies, environment, and political and social systems. In order to meet the challenges of global competition, all Indian business enterprises are required to transform themselves.

Our way of facing the challenges of the future is through our own transformation by harnessing the innate values of India in our approach to business.

Central to the whole theme is a very important principle in Indian philosophy, viz., *SARVE JANĀHA SUKHINO BHAVANTU*—Satisfaction of all. Even industrialized economies acknowledge this principle which is deeply rooted in spirituality and philosophy.

Our success will be a victory for India

and those in the rest of the world who believe that business has a greater responsibility than simply the satisfaction of its own needs—that it has a responsibility to the whole of the society which it is meant to serve.

Most importantly, we are facing competitors who are very strong financially, professionally, technically and commercially. We *must* match them in all of these areas. This will require each of us to be committed to continuous inner learning and spiritual growth. Toward this end we have initiated a number of self-development programmes including training in self-management and team working.

KVK firmly believed that the spiritual values of India provide the basis for the ideal management system. Until his untimely death in June '93, he was actively working towards creating an International Management Academy based upon the innate spiritual values of India.

### *The Vision of the Academy*

Following is the way K. V. K. Raju described his vision of the Management Academy:

The day will come when, instead of sending their people to universities in U.S.A. or Europe for Management education, companies will send them here, to India. People will come to recognize that Indian spiritual values provide the basis for the best management system.

We will create a Management Academy that will turn out world-class managers who are also outstanding leaders with the virtues, discipline and humility necessary to make heroic changes in themselves and in turn improve society.

This inspiration is now guiding us in

the development of the KVK Raju International Management Academy. The Introduction to this Academy has been given to you. We would like to have your suggestions and advice on how best to implement this idea.

#### 6. RECREATING NAGARJUNA IN THE EMERGING GLOBAL SCENARIO: 'WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD!

I am sure that India will emerge as an economic powerhouse in the next 10 years. The emerging economic scenario provides tremendous opportunities as well as challenges to us. We have drawn up an ambitious plan which will eventually enable us to increase our asset base to 5 billion dollars. Most of the investments will be in the core sectors which have direct impact on the economy and have a multiplier effect on other industries. In each of these areas we would like to add significant value to the economy and society while pursuing our own business objective.

As an example, I would like to highlight our strategic plan relating to agri-business over the next five years. Our country's population has crossed 900 million and is growing at the rate of 18 million every year. More than 30% of our people are below the absolute poverty line. Even though India has 145 million hectares of land under cultivation, as against 100 million hectares in China, our annual food production is only 180 million tonnes against China's 400 million tonnes. Paddy production per hectare in India averages only 3 to 4 tonnes against 8 to 10 tonnes in China and Vietnam. On the average, productivity of major food crops, fruits and vegetables in India is less than 1/10th of the world's best.

Agriculture is vital to overcoming poverty in the country, both as a provider of food and of jobs. A 33% increase in per

capita food consumption is needed to bring the diet of the present population up to minimum international nutritional standards for caloric intake. In order to meet the food requirements of all its people at the turn of the century, India's total food production should double.

On the other hand, India possesses four outstanding competitive advantages in agriculture compared to those of any other country.

First, it is climatically favourable for cultivation of every economic plant species grown in other parts of the world—ranging from temperate orchard crops like apples to tropical mangoes.

Second, the country already has the largest acreage of irrigated land in the world with 40% of the potential still to be tapped.

Third, the country has a greater abundance of manpower in all categories—skilled, unskilled, technical, scientific and managerial—than any other nation.

Fourth, the gap between present productivity and proven technological potential is very large in most areas; even so, the country is already the world's largest producer of tea, cotton and sugar, and among the top three for food grains, groundnut, coffee and milk. However, a big gap still exists.

Thanks to the progressive economic policies adopted by our present Government, India is now poised for agri-revolution. We intend to play a proactive role in bringing about this revolution by providing comprehensive productivity improvement packages to the farmer. A target of 100% improvement in farm productivity in 4/5 years is on our agenda.



We are already in a position to provide critical inputs like Fertilizer, Seeds, Plant Protection Chemicals and Water Management Systems.

We are setting up an R & D Centre manned by the best agricultural scientists of the country from various disciplines for transferring the technology already available worldwide to the farm. We have set up a model farm to educate the farmers about the right application of quality inputs and better farm management practices which will multiply farm productivity several-fold. We have also set a target this year of increasing the farm productivity of 500 farmers spread throughout the country by 25%. We are also planning to provide infrastructure facilities and services for storage, processing, transport and marketing of agri-products so as to maximize the returns to the farmer.

## CONCLUSION

After nearly 45 years of slow and controlled growth, the Indian economy has been recently unshackled. There is bound to be an explosive growth of industry in India in the years to come. If this growth is not managed properly, it could lead to disastrous consequences for the people, the environment and the country. While we consider ourselves fortunate to have the opportunity to participate in this growth, we are determined to play a responsible role and to be held accountable for all our actions in our sphere of activities. We are confident that by adhering to our cherished values we will eventually emerge as a globally competitive organization which is concerned about the country and the world, and which takes the responsibility for the whole of society. In this humble endeavour I seek your good wishes. □

He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work. As it is written,

He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor;  
his righteousness endures forever.

He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your resources and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for great generosity.

—Christianity, 2 Corinthians 9.6–11

# Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Deoghar

By a Special Correspondent of *Prabuddha Bharata*

Dear reader, let us go on a trip. We will visit a school—a rather special school. This school is set in the small town of Deoghar which is hallowed by the presence of Baba Vaidyanath (Shiva). Baba Vaidyanath is as old as history; He finds mention as far back as the *Ramayana*. The town of Deoghar is centred around the temple of Baba Vaidyanath and has always been regarded as a principle *ĥirhasthān* (pilgrimage site) of the Hindus. On the outskirts of this quaint little town is situated our destination, the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith.

As the large iron-wrought gates swing open, we are greeted by a breathtaking vista. Straight ahead, at the end of a long driveway, is a magnificent temple, towering above the whole campus, its distinctive white domes shimmering in the sunlight. The edifice with its characteristic Ramakrishna Temple architecture is a major landmark of Deoghar. In fact, the town is located in a shallow valley between two humps—the temple of Baba Vaidyanath stands on one hump, and the Ramakrishna temple on the other. Apt! The temple is symmetrically flanked by the school hostels, all in fresh white. On both sides of the driveway sprawl spacious playfields.

As we walk along the tree-lined driveway, we are aware of an almost physical difference in the atmosphere. The world outside with its tension and bustle seems to have disappeared with dramatic abruptness. A soothing quiet descends upon us.

Morning prayers have just ended and the students, dressed in spotless white dhoti-kurta, are pouring out of the temple in

orderly lines. They quickly wend their way towards their dormitories. There are eleven dormitories, or *dhāms*, and each is named after a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. These *dhāms* are shared by the three hundred and seventy students of this purely residential school.

These boys are drawn from all over India (and even abroad; there are a number of students from Bangladesh too) and one finds a veritable cross-section of the society among them. Boys of different socio-economic backgrounds, different religions and sects and various cultural groups all live in one big, happy family. When we see a bunch of ten year olds some of whom hail from Bihar, some from Bengal and others from places as far apart as Orissa and Manipur, all laughing, joking, singing and playing together, one instinctively realizes that children, and indeed, human beings, are the same all over the world.

It's drill time now. Soon the empty playgrounds are full of boys dressed in smart drill uniforms. Arranged in age-wise groups, they go through various calisthenics. Most of the groups are led by the older boys. These drill sessions culminate in the annual drill competition. Platoons named after famous Indian warrior-kings such as Ashoka, Kanishka, Rana Pratap and Shivaji are formed. Each platoon vies for the top spot by putting on a great show with precision manoeuvres, mass drill and gymnastics. The gala affair concludes with a 'fire-drill' where all participants perform with lighted torches.

At all such events, at the centre of



activity is one Bidyut-da (Brother Bidyut). Bidyut-da, an ex-student of this very institution, was a keen sportsman in his youth. Sports and physical fitness have been his passion, and the flawlessly organized annual sports day, tournaments and drill competitions of the past decades stand eloquent testimony to his careful planning and leadership.

We walk across a playfield to the spacious gymnasium where a group is practising karate, the well-known Japanese martial art. The karatekas (karate practitioners) are dressed in loose white trousers and white jackets tied at the waist with belts of various colours denoting different levels of proficiency. As we watch these energetic youngsters go through their paces smartly, one can't help imagining how happy Swamiji would have been at the sight.

A bell rings; time for breakfast. Life in Vidyapith is regulated by the bell. Every event in the daily routine is begun and wrapped up by the bell. The series of bells is initially confusing to the newcomer, but to the trained ear of the Ashrama inmate each bell carries an unmistakable message; this bell means 'come and get your breakfast', that one means 'go take a bath' while another says 'time for prayer'. Inevitably, the Ashrama inmates get along easily without that common totem of modern city life—the wristwatch!

Incidentally, in the memories of generations of students the school bell will forever be associated with one name, 'Shambhu-da'. Shambhu-da came to the Vidyapith more than half a century ago as a child and stayed on ever since. Life in the Vidyapith flows at the stroke of his bell. His unfailing precision is legendary. In all these decades, there is only one known instance of Shambhu-da mistiming the bell; the bell was a few minutes late—and Shambhu-da was

in agonies over it for days afterwards! Of frugal habits, he saved most of his wages earned over his lifetime service—and then donated the entire amount to his beloved Vidyapith!

Shambhu-da rings the school bell, and the boys, dressed in their blue and white uniforms, gather in neat ranks for the daily assembly. From the lips of the students and their teachers who stand facing them issues an ancient prayer, a prayer which has been chanted by *guru* and *shishya* (teacher and disciple) since time immemorial:

May we work in harmony, may we share the fruits of our labours, may we accomplish great deeds in harmony, may we be full of vigour and may there be no discord among us! *OM! Shantih! Shantih! Shantih!*—Peace; Peace; Peace!

Examinations are being held today. We take a peek into the cavernous examination hall. All is as it should be; serried ranks of students, some scribbling away furiously at their answer booklets, and others staring at their question papers with faces screwed up in concentration. The usual exam scene in any school.

But wait! Where are those indispensable ingredients of any examination, the invigilators? There aren't any! We learn that examinations in the Vidyapith are entirely invigilation-free. The school reposes full trust in the students and the students return it in equal measure. Ever since this innovation has been introduced there hasn't been a single case of malpractice in the exams.

When one thinks about it, this is a minor revolution in itself. Outside the walls of the Vidyapith also examinations are being held in a myriad schools and colleges. Examination venues swarm with invigilators, armed policemen and flying



squads of inspectors. They seek to conduct free and fair examinations on the basis of fear, and they fail; newspapers are rife with reports of cheating and fraud in exams. In the Vidyapith, there are no invigilators, no policemen and no flying squads and yet exams are plainly free and fair. The difference is that the Vidyapith uses trust, not fear.

Such experiments with innovative methods of education have been a distinct feature of the Vidyapith all through. Traditional teaching methods have undergone changes too. The familiar classroom lecture method is increasingly being supplemented by other less conventional teaching techniques. Audio visual instruction is stressed. For example, students of Class IX are first exposed to a video-recorded TV serial on Indian history. When the history teacher teaches in a class, the students no longer find it a boring lecture; as a result classes are now lively and interesting. Teacher involvement is intense; we hear of how an enthusiastic bunch of twelve year olds and their equally enthusiastic physics teacher got up before 4 a.m. to watch the moons of Jupiter through a telescope (which incidentally was hand made by the same teacher!).

There is a long tradition of dedicated service by the teachers. None exemplify this better than Charu-da. An erstwhile freedom fighter of the Gandhian mould, Charu-da has taught mathematics for six decades to generations of Vidyapith students. Close to eighty now, he still retains a keen interest in music, languages and, of course, mathematics!

The aim of education here is not to stuff the students with facts and figures. Rather the emphasis is on building up the abilities of the boys. Many subjects, especially science and social science, are taught through the 'Project Work' system—stu-

dents get together in groups, study, discuss, write joint reports and make presentations in the classroom on given topics. Seminars are held periodically on topics of interest, generally beyond the limits of the syllabus. Regular seminars for teachers reflect the commitment towards excellence and the urge for self-development on the part of the faculty.

The almighty bell rolls again; exams are over. At first in trickles and then in torrents, the students pour out of the school building and head for the dhams. It's bath time now. The boys go to the collective open-air bath places. Signs of hilarity abound with a lot of shouting, laughter and water splashing. We see the children washing their own clothes. They do it naturally, as a matter of course. But it makes for a striking contrast with their counterparts in the world outside the Vidyapith walls.

The boys live a strictly regulated community life. They have to get out of bed early, tuck in their beds neatly, rush for ablutions, go to morning prayer dressed neatly in dhoti-kurta, rush to drill in the drill uniform, go to the dining hall for breakfast with their own bowls and plates (which they keep spotlessly clean), pack their bags correctly for school so as to be on time for assembly, clean their dormitories after school, and so on till bed-time—a very tall order indeed for your typical ten year old! But, the Vidyapith boys do all this and more, nonchalantly, and would be surprised if you told them they were exceptional.

A little reflection reveals the exact nature of the speciality of the Vidyapith system. The Vidyapith system stands for (as Erich Fromm would put it): 'a **being** concept of life, not a **having** concept of life'. Consider a typical child in a relatively affluent urban family. For entertainment he must have expensive toys, cartoons on TV and the



latest Bollywood hit on the VCR; for food he must have chocolate powder with his milk, otherwise he won't drink it; his clothes have to be of his own choice, be they ever so abominable in the eyes of his hapless parents; his bedtime is as stretchable as the indulgence of his parents. **Have** is the most important word in his life and this is precisely what Fromm calls the **have**-concept of life. With children like this as our future citizens, the hereafter of hyper-consumerism and its attendant evils is assuredly secure.

Unfortunately, there is one thing wrong with this setup; the sole pursuit of pleasure does not bring happiness. In fact, if someone single-mindedly chases pleasure, very soon he finds nothing is pleasing anymore. The pleasure-seeking habit that an ignorant and indulgent society is sowing in its children will almost certainly yield a harvest of frustration, vacuity and sorrow.

Yet the self-same child acquires a radically different, a much more positive and healthy mentality in the Vidyapith. The accent is no longer on *having*; there is no question of keeping expensive toys, little chance of getting food to one's own taste, no way a child can change his daily routine at whim, no way he can 'entertain' himself with video games and movies at will. Movies, games, sweets—all these are there, but in regulated doses; and what is more, they are provided to the whole student community and not according to individual desire and caprice. The emphasis is on *being*; being the best at academics, being a master in art or music, being good at games or athletics, and above all being of good character. These things are openly valued by the monks and teachers, and the children sense this and respond accordingly.

There are other ways in which these subtle differences manifest themselves. For

example, take a festival, say Saraswati Puja. The students decorate the image of the Goddess and conduct the worship (in a fully orthodox fashion) themselves. What a contrast it makes with the usual garish and soulless affair which we are normally accustomed to seeing. Instead of mikes blaring out Hindi film songs, the temple resounds with the sweet and solemn *bhajans* sung by the students. Each festival, be it Shivaratri or Christmas, is observed in like manner. Sri Ramakrishna's Puja is, of course, an occasion for special joy; all the students go in a grand procession around Deoghar. A whole culture, which was dying out, is now being passed on to each generation of students, thus ensuring its survival.

At lunchtime we get further evidence of the self-reliance of the students. The food is served by teams of students. This builds up the students' self-confidence and attitude of service. Moreover, a bond of affection is set up between *shishya* and the *guru* who too is among the diners.

Afternoon: The temperature rises to a sizzling 45°C. We quickly retreat into the cool library. The well-equipped library with its 20,000 titles is heavily frequented by the students. We find that the boys, in spite of being so isolated from society, are nevertheless very well informed about what's happening in the world around—not surprising when one considers the fact that they spend a lot of time reading.

Usually there is a break of about an hour after lunch well timed to give adequate rest. Then classes resume and continue for nearly three hours more. After that comes the most welcome bell of all—playtime! The boys rush out eagerly to the eleven playfields. Cricket, volleyball, basketball, football and hockey are the major outdoor games. Inside the gymnasium some boys are playing table-tennis; some are practising



gymnastics, while the karatekas are working out again. Games are compulsory for all. The stress on vigorous physical exercise is unmistakable.

Groups of boys are at work in the various little garden plots that each dham proudly possesses. The dham-gardens are entirely maintained by the students. Suddenly our attention is drawn towards a group of neatly dressed boys smartly marching out of the school gate. Upon enquiry, we learn that they are going to teach in the Bal-Kendra. The Bal-Kendra is a community service centre run by the Vidyapith to provide education and other basic amenities to the kids of the underprivileged sections of society who live in the locality. Over four hundred children benefit from the Bal-Kendra. The Vidyapith boys voluntarily teach there, thereby fostering a sense of service and social responsibility.

The Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith at Deoghar is a very successful venture in the field of education by the Ramakrishna Mission. Started in 1922 by Swami Sadbhavananda (at the behest of Swami Turiyananda) with five boys under a tree, the institution has now grown to present dimensions with a picturesque thirty-acre campus, in-house hospital with outdoor facilities, modern dairy, bakery, fertile mango orchard and vegetable garden, and a well-equipped computer department. The Vidyapith dairy is a marvel to behold. Built up from humble beginnings through single-minded dedication and sheer grit, the dairy can now boast of automatic milking machines, artificial insemination techniques, the finest Holstein and Red Dane Jersey breeds of milch cows, and unequalled veterinary care of animals. It produces five hundred kgs. of milk per day, with an average yield of fourteen kgs. per cow per day, enough to supply milk to all the inmates of the Vidyapith.

The educational institutions set up by the Ramakrishna Mission at Narendrapur and Purulia are famous, and justifiably so. But few know that the Deoghar Vidyapith served as a template for those institutions. Swami Lokeswarananda, whose name is inseparably connected with Narendrapur, spent a long stretch of his early years in the Vidyapith, whereas the Purulia school was started by Swami Hiranmayananda while he was at the Deoghar Vidyapith.

As evening falls over the Vidyapith we take our leave. The boys dressed in white dhoti-kurta are walking towards the temple to attend *arati*, the evening vespers. The solemn music '*Khandana Bhava Bandhana*' wafted by the cool evening breeze reaches us as we walk down the darkening driveway. As the iron gates swing open, we look back once more at the great temple gleaming in the moonlight, the silent playgrounds and dimly lit buildings. Reflecting that it is indeed possible to turn abstract ideals into concrete reality even in this age of cynicism, we walk out of the portals into a world which no longer seems so dark. □

Having taught the Vedas, the preceptor imparts this post-instruction to the students: 'Speak the truth. Practise righteousness. Make no mistake about study. Having offered the desirable wealth to the teacher, do not cut off the line of progeny.... Let your mother be a goddess unto you. Let your father be a god unto you. Let your teacher be a god unto you. Let your guest be a god unto you. The works that are not blameworthy are to be resorted to, not the others.

—*Taittiriya Upanishad*, I.xi.1-2





*A panoramic view of the temple*

*Boys descend from the temple after matins*



*New entrants take the vows of student-life*



*Teachers take a break*

*Busy at their daily chores*



*Shivaratri*





*Holi—A riot of colours*



*Karate group practice*



*A karate duel*



*Basketball training*



*After winning a friendly football match*



*Milking machine at the dairy*



# Vivekananda and the Hinduism of the Twenty-First Century

DR. THILLAYVEL NAIDOO

*Is India's current commercial and industrial growth a sign of revival as envisioned by Swami Vivekananda? Will the Hindu people be able to retain their faith in God, faith in the innate spiritual nature of humanity, faith in the cherished values of democracy, amidst all the turmoil of changes in society?—are some of the questions prompted here in the author's presentation. Dr. T. Naidoo is senior lecturer and acting head of the Department of Science of Religion, University of Durban-Westville, South Africa.*

While it is true that Swami Vivekananda's contribution to the Parliament of Religions in 1893 was outstanding, if not unique, there is ample evidence to confirm that his talks and lectures in America and Europe, and his discussions with Americans and Europeans in the years following the Parliament were, indeed, more profoundly educative. Americans in particular came to realize for the first time that Hinduism had some unique perspectives on the more important issues of life and was therefore in a very advantageous position in many ways to contribute to the religious thought of all humanity. So Swamiji became one of the most important visitors to that country in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Not only was he a teacher of rare calibre, he was also a teacher with a profound and refreshingly rare message. If correctly understood, this message would have impacted with great force upon the intelligentsia of that educationally hungry nation; perhaps greater than most other scientific or philosophical innovations America was familiar with in the closing years of the nineteenth century.

It was expected, as his biography by his eastern and western disciples states, that the Swami would be recognized for his limitless faith in God and his firm resolve to move

and act according to God's will (*Life*, I: 440).<sup>\*</sup> There ought then to be some focus on the relationship between God's will and the Swami's will as discerned in his resolve to bring about the spiritual regeneration of the Hindu nation and thus to extend this to the social, political and economic uplift of India. This inevitably implied removal of the ignorance and poverty into which India had fallen, and above all, the removal of the backwardness and deprivations from which her people suffered.

During his sojourn in America, the unknown young wandering monk of India had suddenly become a famous man of his time (*Life*, I:440). He made then every effort to accept all the numerous invitations to address the American people and give them a true picture of India and Hinduism. His talks began with an invitation from the Slayton Lyceum Lecture Bureau (*Life*, I: 442). He accepted it as the best way to enable him to broadcast the ideas with which his mind teemed and to disillusion the western people of their erroneous notions about India and Hinduism—even about other Indian religions.

We propose then to consider the legacy

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<sup>\*</sup> *Life of Swami Vivekananda.*

this brilliant young monk left for Hinduism and the Hindu people, and to the world at large. We learn from his biography with what desperate yearning the Swami wanted to bring about the betterment of social and living conditions of his people (*Life*, I: 440). With these improvements would come, inevitably, the regeneration of India's cultural life which would in turn effect political and economic revival, bringing changes of massive proportion the country needed. We would argue that his influence has been powerful and pervasive for the last hundred years and must surely continue to be so for perhaps several thousand years in the future.

How to bring about this uplift of Hinduism was one of the pivotal questions of his life. How to show the true worth of Vedanta philosophy and religion to the western world? How to rectify the many wrong notions westerners had of Hinduism due to their biased and tourist observations

*To speak about the glories of Indian culture was then...highly problematic for the Swami, and he wanted to revive that glory too!*

of the subjugated and poverty-stricken country? As the Swami addressed himself to this, the opportunity also presented itself to him of educating the best representatives of the West's Semitic religions to the fact that they were overbearing in their national and religious ego. Through his wonderful influence these people could rediscover for themselves the innate dignity of their own chosen faiths and at the same time create the necessary atmosphere enabling other faiths to live too. Hindus too, Swamiji believed, should always be open and willing to learn.

During his stay in America, Swami Vivekananda proved himself an outstand-

ing teacher with very unique insights and perceptions into the problems of human life and its ultimate purpose. His talks were therefore always very much sought after, and during his stay in the U.S. he was kept extremely busy fulfilling an incredible number of teaching and speaking engagements. If the *Evanston Index* (*Life*, I: 442) reported on 7 October 1893 that his stay in Chicago had been a continual ovation, it is even more true that the rest of America had increased that ovation with abundant enthusiasm. Swamiji had declared that one of his aims was to broadcast the ideas with which his mind had been occupied. So he travelled the length and breadth of America 'telling of the glories of Indian culture'. For in this the Westerners too would find what they were seeking.

The real tragedy for India was the fact that her very glorious culture had fallen on difficult times, lasting for long centuries. And difficult the times truly were: with abundant evidence of massive poverty, ignorance, superstition, unemployment and squalor. Starvation stalked the land. To speak about the glories of Indian culture was then, at this time, highly problematic for the Swami, and he wanted to revive that glory too!

Most people saw the Swami as purely a man of India, associated with religion—India's religion. But this view of theirs was not strictly correct. For, some of the most prevalent questions of our time, then and in the hundred years since the Swami's first impact upon the world community, are those concerning the value of religion in the universal sense, all over the world. What does religious thought do for humanity? More precisely, what does Hindu religious thought do for Hindu humanity? To educate the whole world was what Swami Vivekananda was concerned with, and what his Movement is still concerned with.



In the closing years of the twentieth century (the present year not excluded) there are Western perception on Hinduism which are awfully disparaging. In a recent request to the present writer, a western student asked that an article on Hinduism intended to be published in a collection of essays on world religions be scrutinized for editorial inaccuracies. The article included a litany of some of the most bizarre notions about what Hinduism is. Consider

Hindus arrive at Benares and meet a priest. Then they recount their family histories to the Brahmin priests. They bathe in the Ganges, drink and gargle with the water, wash and change their clothes. Hindus believe in many gods and goddesses. The soul may transmigrate from a vegetable, animal, or human body up or down the scale depending on its activities, and may experience eight million four hundred thousand births.

Admittedly, much of these impressions have been gleaned from actual Hindu behaviour along the Ganges. But the question concerns Western abilities to elicit authentic information on the Hindu religion from sources other than patterns of behaviour at Benares or Calcutta. No book on Hinduism by a Western non-Hindu writer ever fails to mention the worst evils of the caste system, and none feels obliged to believe that Hinduism could possibly stand equal in its theological imperatives to any religion of the western Semitic religions.

It was in an even worse predicament and time of universal ignorance and misinformation about India that Swamiji found himself in America. He knew India well, for he had travelled the length and breadth of the country to give himself an authentic view of the land, its people, and the social mores they had inherited from their history.

It was the Swami's God-given task to enlighten the American people to the true picture of India and Hinduism. While doing so he lost no opportunity to study the methods of the industrial and economic systems of the West so that he could later apply those in definite and practical ways to relieve the wants of his people (*Life*, I: 447).

Therefore, we want to suggest that Swami Vivekananda was a major contributor to the evolution of the modern Indian lifestyle evident now in her commercial and industrial growth. If Hinduism could be presented—if Hinduism and Hindu conceptions could be seen—as holding the required propensities for reconstruction and development at every level of human existence, then the religion and culture of the Indian people are worthy of the sacrifices the Swami was making with every

*...we want to suggest that Swami Vivekananda was a major contributor to the evolution of the modern Indian lifestyle evident now amidst the country's commercial and industrial growth.*

breath of his life. This worthiness of the Indian people Swamiji believed in. One is now led to ask whether the uplift of India is preceding the uplift to Hinduism, or whether the meaningful reconceptualizations by Swami Vivekananda of the teachings of Hinduism are helping to bring about regeneration of the Hindus and of civilization everywhere. It is a moot question.

But we believe the Swami opened a new chapter in the history of Vedanta when he presented it to the American people. By so doing he opened a new vista on religious thought for Hindus too. Thus Swamiji's arguments for reconciliation between social and religious behaviour proved his worth as a religious teacher of extraordinary excel-



lence. His perceptions have generated much discussion on holistic human behaviour and have impacted with considerable innovative influence on Hinduism of the twenty-first century and beyond. One's knowledge of the Ramakrishna Movement worldwide and its impact on the twentieth century thought gives sufficient evidence of how the groundwork has been laid and what its implications are for the future of religion on this planet.

India has been described often enough as the world's largest democracy. And reconceptualization of human values since 1947 has ensured that people in most countries in the world agree that democracy is a political ideal worth preserving for much of our future. It is particularly noteworthy that while most western nations are realizing that they no longer have a monopoly on the civilizing forces of the world, and on world leadership, countries like India are finding the opportunity to assert their rightful places as equal partners in the family of nations. However, some of the most important questions that Hindu India needs to face are those that focus very squarely on the value of democracy, for both religious and political reasons.

There is the prevailing perception that liberal democratic values are the most acceptable of all political values in the world, and those who admire post-Independent India are concerned that the best of human values are seen to be preserved through naturally imbibed principles extant in India since Vedic times. For closely associated with democratic values is the legacy of human rights. The Indian Government is held accountable to the people of India, to the majority will of the people. Civil and political liberties are carefully preserved for the purposes of the great value of human freedom. These are regarded as unique achievements, achievements that

enhance the democratic franchise in the well-established liberal state, one of the purposes of which is to provide the conditions for a competitive market-based society. India needs to ask just how her liberal democratic power will retain the values of freedom and individuality which her culture has nurtured through the heritage of Vedantic Ideals, namely and particularly, the essential goodness, divinity, and dignity of man.

No discussion on the fostering of democratic values can possibly ignore the foundations of India's democratic principles as understood and enunciated by Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhiji firmly believed that the democracy that had to be fostered in India had to be a democracy that in essence meant the art and science of mobilizing the entire physical and spiritual resources of all the various segments of society for the common good of all (*Selected Works*, IV: 446).<sup>\*</sup> This view of Gandhiji is of course in the very spirit, and nearly the very words, of Swami Vivekananda.

Gandhiji spoke of the training for Swaraj, a true democracy or the Swaraj of the masses that could never come through untruthful or violent means. Swaraj did not come through violent means, and sadly for India and the world, violence is an ever present menace. While peace, truth, love and non-violence were the ingrained concepts upon which the nation fashioned its independence, the hard reality of the democratic ideal is that it is based on a foundation of military strength. India's commanding presence as a nuclear power of considerable strength is the cold, hard reality of our times. India possesses the fourth largest armed forces in the world and possibly the third largest air force. Arguments for a strong and capable navy in par-

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<sup>\*</sup> *The Selected Works of M.K. Gandhi.*



ticular are usually well presented. The compromise with Gandhian ideals is mitigated somewhat by the fact that India has always disclaimed any aggressive policy or intention. Not exactly Swamiji's ideal either, but an approximation of his vision nevertheless. A vision of a country free, powerful, liberal, democratic, happy and religiously strong.

Swamiji held strong views concerning India as an independent democracy. His assessment was that the Indian people were not really in darkness about their country's greatness, and they also possessed deep faith in her economic and political potential. Thus he had great faith in India. Not many citizens, one thinks, are really aware of the role played by Swamiji in formulating some of the fundamental strategies that were based upon the potential he saw in India, as a democracy and as an economic giant.

*One prefers to believe that Swamiji's Grace hovers over India.*

India will soon be celebrating her forty-ninth anniversary of Independence. One is reminded of the night in Chicago more than a hundred years ago when the Swami, painfully aware of the plight of his countrymen, shed tears of bitter agony that so many had to live in such dire poverty, while the people of America lived in so much comfort. One is tempted to argue that it was Swamiji's agony that night which marked the turning point in India's economic history. What then, to repeat the question, the relationship between the will of God and the will of the Swami?

Republic Day, January 26th was celebrated in New Delhi last year in the presence of a famous visitor: the South African State President. A newspaper correspondent described the scene: A large balloon portrait of Mahatma Gandhi took

centre stage at India Gate at the celebration. 'With a quaint smile he watched India's military might stomp past. He also watched billions of U.S. dollars worth of military equipment being shown off to the world...' (*Post Natal*). India's armed forces are now ranked among the strongest in the world, but it is money and more money that produces such a defence capability. In 1982, arguing that 'the intense and rapidly growing military activities of the major powers in the Indian Ocean have serious implications for the nation', the Indian Navy signed an agreement to procure three additional Kashin-class destroyers and three modified Kresta-class cruisers. Ashley Tellis is of the view that the navy spends hundreds of millions of pounds sterling on defence equipment such as potent maritime force Tornados and SU24 Fencers providing a capability more lethal than anything the navy has ever put to sea for deterrence purposes before.

It is most unfortunate that India's vast economic growth has to be encapsulated by a display of military strength. But this is one side of the picture. The truth is that India is now regarded as the fifth largest economic power in the world following the United States, Japan, China and Germany, and seventh of the world's largest industrial nations. One reads of Indian computer companies being at the leading edge of software development. The country has a valuable resource in its technically skilled manpower. India holds the third largest technological pool in the world and is one of the world's largest employers of nuclear scientists. Bangalore is described as the Silicone Valley of India. There was a time, says a newspaper report, when the world spoke of 'Japan Incorporated'. What now emerges is 'India Incorporated', a strong software presence the world over. Airlines around the world schedule their flight programmes on Indian software. India now has the

second largest scientific manpower pool in the world, second only to the United States.

In a letter to Sister Nivedita on 4 July 1897 from Almora, Swamiji spoke of the need for a 'dynamic religion'. He, more than any other religious teacher one could name, innovated in this regard. While it is true, as the newspaper reporter covering Dr. Nelson Mandela's visit to India for the Republic Day celebration confirms, that the plight of India's poor often appears as hopeless as it has ever been, one deeply hopes that this will not always be the case. One prefers to believe that Swamiji's Grace hovers over India. He was without question the fiery champion of his Motherland. To many thousands of Americans he was also a prophet of Divine Truth awakening them to the life of the Spirit. Awakening people to the life of the Spirit could well entail a cultural revolution that will yet bring peace and prosperity to the world and more especially to the country that gave him birth.

*Prabuddha Bharata* has the responsibility of leading religious people to realize the vision that Swamiji had. He saw in his mind's eye a future perfect India rising out of chaos and degradation, an India glorious

and invincible with a Vedanta brain and Islamic body. He did not foresee the humiliation of a divided India, but as history may yet determine in the future, it would be a positive India with a population cut to size but a spiritual glory growing to unimaginable greatness in keeping with the glory that was brought to her soil by Rama, Krishna, Ramakrishna, and many others of their stature. □

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In enjoyment is the fear of disease,  
In high birth, the fear of losing caste,  
In wealth, the fear of tyrants,  
In honour, the fear of losing [it],  
In strength, the fear of enemies,  
In beauty, the fear of [old age],  
In knowledge, the fear of defeat,  
In virtue, the fear of scandal,  
In the body, the fear of death,  
In this life all is fraught with fear:  
Renunciation alone is fearless.

—A free translation from Bhartrihari's  
*Vairagya Shatakam* by Swami Vivekananda



# Ethical Dimensions in Sufism

DR. RAMA PRASAD BANERJEE

*The Lord called by so many names being Infinite, Infinite must be the ways to Him. The author is a Research Fellow of the Management Centre for Human Values, Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta.*

## 1. Introduction

Sufism is a way of life in relation to the inward journey of man. It is that particular discipline of man which expresses through the manifestation of Soul. The Sufis experience the Truth (*al-Haqq*), establishing relationship with God in their mystical way, seeking nothing but the Supreme. Sufis' experience of Truth is through direct and personal realization. They are persons of feeling (*ashabul-ahwal*), and not persons of words. They are not contented with mere intellectual understanding of a thing; rather they want to have a direct feeling—'knowing *siddhi* by its intoxication'. In short, a Sufi establishes a direct relationship with God, experiences God, enjoys the realization of Him and distributes the fruit to others.

Sufism is a way of life with 'mystic tuning'. Sufis with their own philosophy and practices do not care for the mundane life, but strive for divine realization. *Tasawwuf* was the old name of Sufism. It is the general notion that the Sufis are Muslims, Sufism being a sect developed by the Muslims from the seventh century AD. The meaning of Sufi mysticism is awareness, or the immediate experience, of the identity of the human soul with God. The Sufi experiences Him everywhere, with the vision of being embraced with the Divine.

Seeking *al-Haqq*, the ultimate Truth, those who are *ajzi* (unable to attain mystical experience on the divine path) cannot become Sufis in the true sense of the term.

Experience of the ultimate Truth means liberty. It makes man free from the bonds of desires, free for attachment to the unreal by realizing his unrelatedness to all material things. Nothing is related to him and he is related to nothing. Ghazali described the ascetic qualities of a Sufi: The role of a Sufi is that 'poverty should be his adornment, patience his ornament, satisfaction his steed, and trust his dignity.'<sup>1</sup> This means that a true Sufi is he who practises renunciation from material possessions, abstinence from desires for the pleasure of worldly gains, containment and complete dependence on God for everything which he wants to attain.

## 2. Early Sufi Thought:

During the course of the eighth and ninth centuries the Muslim religious intelligentsia tended to become divided into two groups: the *Ulama*, or pure theologians and legists, on one hand, and those who took to religion on a more personal basis. The first group developed the law. The legal life which was the first formulated expression of Islam gradually became Impersonal. It was as a reaction against this legal formulation of Islam that the early pietistic ascetism changed definitely into what is technically known as Sufism with its proper ethos. Trust in God (*tawakkul*), the Quaranic concept, was developed into an extreme doctrine of renunciation of the world.

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1. M. Smith, *Readings from the Mystics of Islam*, 1950, no. 66, pp. 63-4.

Among the mystics the degree of renunciation varied. Malik ibn Dinar and Muhammad ibn Wasi of the eighth century, for example, differed over the question of possessions of means of subsistence. Malik was in favour of possessing a piece of land on which one could live and be independent of men, while Ibn Wasi preferred to be a man who, if he had a meal, knew not whence the next would come.

This development of the doctrine of *tawakkul* directly led to the central Sufi concept of the relationship between man and

*This means that a true Sufi is he, who practises renunciation from material possessions, abstinence from desires for the pleasure of worldly gains, containment and complete dependence on God for everything which he wants to attain.*

God. The concept of love and grace have been fused into one sentiment. Rabia al-Adawiya (late eighth century), the famous woman saint, expressed this sentiment in her famous verses:

I love Thee with two loves,  
love of my happiness,  
And perfect love, to love Thee as is  
Thy due.  
My selfish love is that I do naught  
But think on Thee, excluding all beside;  
But that purest love, which is Thy due,  
Is that the veils which hide Thee fall,  
And I gaze on Thee.

No praise to me in either this or that,  
Nay, Thine the praise for both  
that love and this.<sup>2</sup>

Another view of love was held by Maruf

al-Karkhi. He has said, 'Love is not to be learnt from men, it is a gift of God and comes of His grace.'

Abul-Fayd b. Ibrahim Dhu'l Nun (AD 859) of Egypt is regarded as the father of theosophical mysticism by Sufis of all sects and was known as the Imam, or the spiritual leader, of *awliya*, or saints of God. Dhul-Nun was the first Sufi who spoke on the doctrine of *tawhid*, or unity of God, and introduced the concept of a pantheistic God. He considered the soul's inclination towards affliction and suffering as a great mystical achievement on the divine path. He says:

The Sufis desire fellowship with sickness and misfortune, to keep company with anxiety and weakness; for, such things in their life lead to healing. He who does not reckon affliction as a grace is not one of the wise. The saintly virtue of affliction makes the devotee humble in the presence of God and is a sign of spiritual perfection....God gives His servant no source of strength more powerful for him than when He leads him to humiliate himself.<sup>3</sup>

The idea of repentance in Sufi thought is that of relating to divine experiences. He repents, being ashamed of negligence of the feeling of closeness to God. Repentance of an ordinary man (*tawbat al-inabat*) does not indicate kinship with God, but the repentance of the aspirant (*tawbat al-istihya*) is concerned with direct fellowship with God. Dhul-Nun divides knowledge of god into three kinds:

*Marifat bar seh Wajah ast. Yake marifat-i tawhid wa in amma mominanrast. Dom marifat-i hujjat wa beyan ast wa in hukma*

2. Rahman Fazlur, *Islam*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966, p. 130.

3. R.S. Bhatnagar, *Dimensions of Classical Sufi Thought* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Pvt. Ltd., 1992), p. 52.



*wa balgha wa 'ulema raast. Som marifat-i Sifat-i wahdaniyyat ast wa in ahl-i wilayat Allah raast. An Jamarati ke shahid-i Haqq and badilhae khesh ta Haqq tala bar aeshon zahir mi gardanad anche bar hech kas az' alamiyan Zahir nagardanad.*

The Knowledge of God is three-fold: first, the knowledge of the unity of God; and this is common among the believers. Second, the knowledge reached through arguments and demonstration; and this is the knowledge of the wise, the eloquent and the learned. Third, is the knowledge of the attributes of Divine Unity; and this belongs to the saints who contemplate on God within their hearts, so that God reveals Himself to them in a way in which He is not revealed to any man of the world.<sup>4</sup>

A Sufi negates the 'I' (*nafs*). The spirit (*ar-Ruh*) and the soul (*an-nafs*) engage in battle for the possession of their common son, the heart (*al-qalb*). By *ar-Ruh* is here to be understood the intellectual principle which transcends the individual nature; *an-nafs* means the psyche, the centrifugal tendencies of which determine the diffuse and inconstant domain of the 'I'; *al-qalb* is considered the point of intersection of the *ar-Rih* (vertical ray) and *an-nafs* (the horizontal plane). In the Sufi concept, form divides and binds whereas the spirit, which is above form, unites and at the same time distinguishes reality from appearance. In essence *ar-Ruh* is identified with the divine act order (*al-Amr*) and is the eternal enunciations of the Supreme Being.

Sufi means, strictly speaking, one who is essentially identified with the Divine Act, hence the saying that the Sufi is not created (*as-Sufi lam Y ukhlaq*), which can also be understood as meaning: that

being who is thus reintegrated into the Divine Reality....<sup>5</sup>

### 3. Early Sufism in India (c. 1200–1500)

Three great Sufi orders had migrated from Persia and Iraq into the northern part of India. These were: the *Chisti*, the *Suhrawardi*, and the *Firdausi*. The *Chisti* was the largest and most popular. The great saints of this order were: Nizam ud-din Aulia (1238–1325) and Nasirud-din Muhammad Chiragh of Dehli (d. 1356). Some other important saints were Amir Khusrau, the famous poet, and Aiyaz Ud-din Barnim, the historian. The tombs of the mystic-saints of the Order are usually honoured by both the Hindu and the Muslim communities. The *Suhrawardi* Order was primarily confined to Sind. The *Firdausi* Order was established in Bihar.

### 4. Sufi Streams

The main stream of Sufism with their founder-advocates were as follows:

a) The Sufi System of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali initiated the process of reconciliation of theological and mystical trends. His main treatise on Sufism, *Ihya Ulum al-din* (*The Revival of Religious Sciences*) interpreted Sufism as the result of reconciliation of 'Shariat' (the Law) and 'tariqat' (the spiritual paths). He blended teachings of Islam with the traditions. Ghazali was influenced to some extent by the Neoplatonism. He describes the doctrine of Sufism as a doctrine to live and practise, the gist of which 'lies in overcoming the appetites of the flesh and getting rid of its evil dispositions and vile qualities so that the heart may be cleared of all but God. The means of clearing it is *dhikr allah*, commemoration of God and concentration of every thought

4. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

5. Titus Burckhardt, *An Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, translated by D.M. Matheson (Thorsons Publishers, Ltd., 1976), p. 27.

upon Him.<sup>6</sup>

Thus Ghazali emphasized restraint over carnal desires, his idea being that this restraint ultimately takes the follower of the path to a higher mystical stage when the purified soul enjoys the presence of God. In his version the inward transformation is expressed thus:

Once I had been a slave: lust was  
my master;  
Lust then became my servant,  
I was free;  
Leaving the haunts of men, I sought  
Thy presence.  
Lonely, I found in Thee my company.<sup>7</sup>

A true Sufi is with a pure Self, which silently communes with God while in prayer and meditation. The Sufi unfolds himself to God and loves union with Him. Ghazali believes that a genuine lover of God

(contemplation). In *Mishkat al-anwar*, Ghazali describes the real state of *fana*: 'when the mystic enters into the pure and absolute unicity of the one and into the kingdom of the one and Alone, mortals reach the end of their ascent.'<sup>9</sup>

b) Abd al-Qadir Jilani was the founder of Quadriyya sect of Sufis. His ideas were an attempt to make a synthesis between theological knowledge and mystical knowledge. Jilani considers him a true Sufi who observes the law and follows the traditions. For this purpose, three things are required by the believer in God: 'First, to submit to God's decree; second, to safeguard from that which is forbidden (in law); and third, to remain satisfied with Fate.'<sup>10</sup>

Jilani distinguished lower self from the higher Self and laid emphasis on the control of lower self for 'Ubudiyyat (realization of God)'. He says: 'Thy carnal self (*nafs*) is an

*Love (mahabbat) between the lover and the Beloved is the most genuine. Other stages of love are viz. love for the empirical world, for the individual self, for the worldly beauty and goodness, and soul's inclination towards moral values—though a true Sufi experiences all these, his primordial urge is to be in love with God.*

does not fear his death because his separation from the phenomenal world takes him to a state of vision of his beloved. Love (*mahabbat*) between the lover and the Beloved is the most genuine. Other stages of love are viz. love for the empirical world, for the individual self, for the worldly beauty and goodness, and soul's inclination towards moral values—though a true Sufi experiences all these, his primordial urge is to be in love with God. The lover or knower of God, 'arif' (the knower), experiences knowledge<sup>8</sup> of Him through *il-i muktashafa*

enemy of God and is opposed to Him. Other things are under His command.... The devotion to God lies in becoming hostile to the lower self and passions.<sup>11</sup> The process of attaining spiritual perfection is thus, giving up the lower self. Carnal desire and individual will 'left (renounced)' means persons become worthy of the Abode of

the intellectual knowledge (*ila*).

9. *Mishkat al-Anwar*, p. 118 (See M. Smith, *Readings from the Mystics of Islam*, no. 73, p. 69).

10., *Futuh al-Ghayb*, Book I, Urdu translation by Sayyed, Sikandar Shah (Delhi: Indian Printing Works, 1960), p. 18.

11. *Ibid.*, Book X, p. 35.

6. R.S. Bhatnagar, p. 80.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

8. This knowledge is *marifa*, or gnosis, unlike



knowledge of God. Detachment from the worldly things and being indifferent towards the belongings of mankind are the preconditions to divine realization. 'Seek not any benefit; suffer not any loss' is the message of Jilani. 'The sign of passing away of thy will into the will of God is that thou dost not determine anything and there remains no desire, need, or purpose within thee.'<sup>12</sup>

c) The Sufi Mysticism of Muhyiuddin Ibn al-Arabi:

Ibn Al-Arabi advocated the monistic concept of God known as '*Wahdatu'l-wajud*' (Unity of Being) in his main works: *Al-Futuh al-Makkiyya* (The Meccan Revelations) and *Fusus al-hikam* (The Bezels of Divine Wisdom). He was the pioneer of the Sufi doctrine of '*hama ost*' (All is He) and advocated a perfect monistic philosophy. The view of Ibn al-Arabi was a distinct departure from the Quranic concept of one God—a purely personal God as preached by the Prophet of Islam. Ibn al-Arabi described his idea of the monistic God with the words:

God is Eternal, Infinite, Absolute and the ultimate Cause of everything which exists since He alone exists. God is one underlying the many. He is the essence of the objects as well as the objects themselves because it is He who manifests Himself in them. In His state of Unity, God exists in Himself and in His state of multiplicity, He exists through Himself.<sup>13</sup>

The Supreme Divine transcends space and time, form and order. Ibn al-Arabi explains His nature as:

He is and there is with Him no before or

after, nor above nor below, nor far nor near, nor union nor division, nor how nor where, nor place. He is now as He was, He is the One without oneness and the Single without singleness...<sup>14</sup>

Ibn al-Arabi's concept of the Supreme is at par with the Upanishadic concept of *pūrṇattva* (wholeness). He describes God as That without any beginning or end—the boundless, spaceless, timeless Entity. He can be realized neither by intellect, nor by sense, nor by perception. He can be seen neither by the outward eyes nor by the inward eye of a man. He can be realized neither by the bound nor by the conceptual boundlessness. 'By Himself He sees Himself and by Himself He knows Himself.' Nothing is there outside Him. There cannot be anything other than God. He who perceives that is wrong. He is the Ruler as well as the ruled; He is the Creator as well as the created; He is the beggar as well as the sick; He is the Knower and the known. He is the only existent Being.

God transcends all values, relations and attributes. A Sufi can attain the state of mystical ecstasy and only then realize the all-transcendent God. Ibn al-Arabi explains that *al-Haqq* (Creator) and *al-Khalq* (Creation) are the same. Nothing new can be there in the creation other than the Creator. *Insan* (man) can realize this through the path of love and mystical experience. Ultimately he finds that he is one with the Divine. No duality exists; nothing in between. He rejects the idea of God's incarnation of man (*hulul*) as well as the idea of identification of man with God (*ittihad*).

*Concept of Soul in Ibn al-Arabi*

According to al-Arabi, human soul is divided into three categories—rational-soul, animal-soul, and vegetation-soul.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

13. R.S. Bhatnagar, p. 88.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

Rational-soul performs psychological functions like willing, thinking, remembering, understanding, etc. The animal-soul is concerned with instincts of material desires, lust and passion. The vegetation-soul is associated with the physical aspect of man, i.e. qualities of assimilation and nourishment. This human soul or individual soul is in integral existence with the Divine Soul. It is on account of lack of *marifa* (Divine Knowledge) that we do not believe in individual soul as a part of the Divine Soul. On gaining divine knowledge we realize the truth that our soul is nothing but the Divine Soul in its original form. The ultimate knowledge the Sufi gathers at this perfect state of mystical experience (*warid*) is that the soul and body are nothing but the internal and external sides of one absolute Unity.

In *fana*, or the process of awareness of oneself with God, man gets freed from the bondage of ignorance; the mystic regains the state of *al-Haqq*, his original character. The stage of perfect *fana* is reached gradually by a mystic. In this transformation from the stage of unreal self to Pure Self, or becoming conscious of the identity of the self with God, the Sufi transcends the states of the human and mortal world. Ibn al-Arabi says:

Within my heart, all forms may  
find a place,  
The cloisters of the monk,  
the idols fane,  
A pasture for gazelles,  
the Sacred House  
Of God, to which all Muslims  
turn their face:  
The tables of the Jewish Law,  
the word of  
God, revealed unto His prophet true.  
Love is the faith I hold, and whereso'er  
His camels turn, the one true faith  
is there.<sup>15</sup>

The problem of morality is tackled from the same angle. The evils are those who are deprived of *marifa*, or the knowledge of God. Only absolute Reality (*al-Haqq*) is good (*al-Khayt al-Mahid*); evil is the absence of this good. Those who believe in the universal God are away from sin and automatically moral. In order that the world (*al-khalq*) may enjoy goodness, it must seek the Truth (*al-Haqq*).

d) Moral Teachings of Shaykh Mu'inuddin Chisti:

Khwa Mu'inuddin (popularly known as Gharib Nawaz) was a pious Muslim saint. Settled in Ajmer in India, he established the Chistiyya Sufi sect (*tariqa*). He preached the doctrine of renunciation and love as the only true means for realization of God and unification with Him. According to him, a true Sufi is he who renounces the world and follows the path of love. Renouncing lust and temptation are preconditions to God-realization. Mu'inuddin says:

*Chahar chiz gawhar-i nafs ast. Awwal dar-weshi ke tawangari numayad. Dom gursana ra sir gardanad. Som andohgin ke hadi numyad. Chaharam marde ke ba u dushman burvad dosti numayad.*<sup>16</sup>

Four things are the gems of the soul. First, poverty which manifests (spiritual) richness; second, satisfying a hungry man; third, (physical) suffering, revealing (inner) happiness and fourth, showing friendliness to one who is an enemy.

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Quoted in R.S. Bhatnagar, p. 97.

16. Shaykh Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, *Dalilul-arifin* (Kanpur: Nawal Kishore Press, 1889), p. 55; (the conversations of Shaykh Mu'inuddin Chisti).

15. Tarjuman al-Aswaq (London, 1911), p. 19.



*Agar in Kas ra seh Khaslat buwad haqiqat badan ke khudai tata u ra dost mi darad Awwal anke sakhatwat chun sakha wat-i darya wa shafqat chun shafout-i aftat wa tarwadu' chun tarwadu'-i-zamin.*<sup>17</sup>

He is a friend of God who attains three virtues: First, generosity like that of the river; second, kindness like that of the Sun; third, hospitality like that of the earth.

According to Chisti, the best things of the world are:

*Far mind ke' aziz tarin chize ke darjahan ast. Farmud seh chiz ast. Awwal 'alime ke sakhat-i u az ilm-i khud buwad. Dom marde ke ra tama na buwad. Som arife ke paiwasta aifat dost kunad.*<sup>18</sup>

There are three best things in the world: First, the knower whose thoughts are derived from his own mystical experiences; second, the man who is not greedy; and third, the gnostic who has realized the attributes of God.

Mu'inuddin says the path of love is full of calamities, but for the knower it turns pleasurable:

*Sadiq dar mahabbat kase buwad ke chun balai dost baz gardad u bafatu' reghbat an bala ra qabul kunad.*

The true seeker in love of God is he who welcomes the afflictions which descend upon him from God showing his inclinations for them.

Mu'inuddin emphasizes the essentiality of gnosticism for the wellbeing of the phenomenal world also. He says:

*Arifan aftar sifat and Bar Jumlagi-i alam mi taband ke as anwar-i aeshan hama adad baqri.*<sup>19</sup>

The gnostics are blessed with sun-like qualities. They shine over the entire universe so that the rest of the things become illuminated by their glory.

e) Other important Sufi mystics include:

Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, who advocated friendship with God. He contends that one's friendship with God is established only when he is satisfied with what is

*He is a friend of God who attains three virtues: First, generosity like that of the river; second, kindness like that of the Sun; third, hospitality like that of the earth.*

bestowed upon him and expresses gratitude to God. According to him, the more a mystic nears God the more is he a saint. The mystic in the advanced stage of love becomes dead to himself and realizes the Divine.

Bahauddin Zakariyya: He founded the Suhrawardiyya Order of dervishes in India. Shyakh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi was his master. Zakariyya accommodated the worldly pleasures in the life of a mystic—he was in favour of inward separation from the worldly affairs and things only.

Fariduddin Masood Ganj Shakar: He was the renounced disciple of Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki (of Ajadhan or Pakpatan) and is regarded as the second spiritual descendant of Shaykh Mu'inuddin Chisti. He interpreted Sufi ideas in terms of Quranic teachings. His teaching was that the more loved the world is the more one comes away

17. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

19. *Tariqat.*

from God. He identifies 'this world' as the cause of all pollutions and the veil between man and the Divine (his Master).

Shaykh Hamiduddin of Nagare was also a disciple of Mu'inuddin Chisti, who gave much importance to 'inmost Self'. His teaching was to have a full control over the *nafs*, or lower self, through *muragaba*, or watching the self. Empirical knowledge, according to him, is the knowledge of the lower self, and spiritual knowledge is the real knowledge. He contends that intellectual approach to Truth can lead to nowhere. God known through human attributes is finite and imperfect. Only in the state of self-annihilation can the seeker realize the Truth. Hamiduddin says: '*Tariqat* (the mystic path) is the spirit of Shariat (the law).'<sup>20</sup> Nizamuddin Awaliya (or Khwaya Nizamuddin), the fourth spiritual disciple was popularly known as 'Mahabub-i Ilahi'.

Nizamuddin categorized Knowledge into three categories: the *tour his*, the *tour aql*, and the *tour quds*—sensual knowledge, intellectual knowledge, and intuitive knowledge. Nizamuddin says that Soul's purification means one's complete freedom from the bondage of *nafs*, the lower self. The renouncer can become a true lover of God. He classifies love of God into two kinds—*mahabbat-i dhat*, or love of the pure Divine Essence, and *mahabbat-i sifat*, love of the attributes of God. The person who surrenders individual-will to the Divine will experiences *mahabbat-i dhat*. He remembers God unceasingly. The moment he does not remember Him, he is separated from Him. The seeker after God must obey six fun-

damental principles.<sup>21</sup> These are: 1) practise of a deserted and solitary life, ii) purity at the times of prayers and ablution, iii) developing the habit of keeping fasts, iv) overlooking everything for the sake of God, v) being a sincere follower of his spiritual Master (*shaykh*), and vi) regarding God above everything in the two worlds.

Jalaluddin Rumi elaborated the theory of spiritual evolution. Creation is, in fact, creating a distance from God. Everything, even matter, is spiritual. The objects appear from God in a downward process. Through evolution one spiritual being passes away to another spiritual being. The principle of 'will to live' takes a low form to a higher form. Rumi distinguishes between 'ego' of the lower self and the ego of the higher transcendental self. The latter is the real Self and the lower self is unreal, associated with the worldly desires. *Taric*, or the spiritual path, leads the lower self to the Divine. The Sufi thus becomes *insanu'l kamil*, or the perfect man. According to Rumi, Ibn al-Arabi is such a perfect man.

Shaykh Abuhulman introduced the concept of incarnation of God in man (*hulu*) in the Sufi thought.

## 5. Conclusion

The Sufis created a distinctive path giving the ideas of *al-Haqq* or the Real, *al-tawhid* or unification, *mahabbat* or love of God, *marifa* or knowledge of God, the various *maqamat* or mystical stages, *ahwal* or spiritual experiences, and *al-insan kamil* or the perfect man. They are lovers of God and preach Divinity to humanity. □

20. R.S. Bhatnagar, pp. 107–08.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 107–206 for general ideas.

Do not assert with your mouth what your heart denies.

—Taoism, Tract of the Quiet Way



# Swami Vivekananda's Ideas and the Australian Society

PRAVRAJIKA AJAYAPRANA

*The Message to humanity of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda removes all barriers and boundaries; it aims to elicit and awaken consciousness of the Eternal Religion—the Sanātana Dharma—where it always exists but has been sleeping. In Australia as in every other society, people have only to awaken to the blessedness which already resides with them. Pr. Ajayaprana feels this is the sure reason why the Australians have a great future in store. The author is the present Head of the Ramakrishna Sarada Vedanta Society of New South Wales, Australia.*

An old

...story shows some of the fundamental values and sensibilities of Aboriginal culture. The old man touches each stone to see if it contains a potency that has predestined it to become a tool and lifelong companion. In the language of the Walbiri, a major Western Desert tribe, the word for this innate potential of a thing is *guruweri*—literally translated as 'totem design'. *Guruweri* refers to the invisible seed or life-creating energy that the Creative Ancestors deposited in the land and in all forms of nature.

The great ancestral beings were vast, unbounded, intangible, vibratory bodies, similar to fields of energy. They created by drawing vibratory energy out of themselves and stabilizing this energy and by specifying, or naming—the inner name is the potency of the form or creature. The comparable image is the creation of sounds, words, or songs from the vibration of breath. Aborigines refer to the Dreamtime creation as the world being 'sung' into existence.

Human creations also first exist as subjective energetic states of consciousness: dreams, intuitions, and thoughts that move, like a pendulum, toward objectification in the external world.

Once consciousness has participated in an external creation or activity, it swings back from an objective reality to a subjective state. This return, which we call memory, forms the residual base of all existence.

The Dreamtime process of creation resembles the simple act of baking bread. First there is an internal desire, a hunger, a need for a delicious morsel existing in a purely energetic state of mind. The desire comes before the bread, just as the dream of the flint is present in the stone before its emergence in the world. Conscious activity then gathers the ingredients in the physical world that correspond to those in the dream. By combining and working the ingredients, the dream of the bread clothes itself in body. As the bread is eaten, the dream is devoured; it becomes internal and visible again. The dream of the bread has been digested into a memory.

Aborigines believe that ancestral spirits created the earth and human-kind in a similar manner, through a sequential swing between an internal dream and a physical objectification.

In their view, the ancestor first dreams his objectifications while sleeping in the camp. In effect, he visualizes

his travels—the country, the songs, and everything he makes—inside his head before they are externalized. Objectifications are conceived as external projections of an internal vision: they come from the inner self of the ancestry into the outer world.

Because Indo-European language dictates that we express all our thoughts in past, present, or future tense, we have the notion that time is an abstract backdrop moving in one direction, like the hands of a clock, from past to future. None of the hundreds of Aboriginal languages contain a word for time, nor do the Aborigines have a concept of time. As with creation, the Aborigines conceive the passage of time and history not as a movement from past to future but as a passage from a subjective state to an objective expression. The first step in entering into the Aboriginal world is to abandon the conventional abstraction of time and replace it with the movement of consciousness from dream to reality as a model that describes the universal activity of creation.

The ritual dances and songs that the Aborigines perform every day celebrate the movement from subjective to objective that created the world. This perception guides every aspect of daily life.<sup>1</sup>

The Aborigines, the real first-dwellers of Australia, have behind them a very interesting Dreamtime-culture dating back to the hoary antiquity of tens of thousands of years. Even the minutest detail of their daily personal and collective life is connected with this Dreamtime where time has no meaning in the ordinary sense of the term as is indicated in the above quotation. To continue probing through the unique nature of the Aboriginal Dreamtime we again turn to Mr. Robert Lawlor:

Dreaming is extended to every facet of creation. Natural light, when absorbed in the chlorophyll of green leaves, begins the miraculous transformation of energy into tissue. Through digestion and assimilation, this initial transformation of light in the plant kingdom becomes the basis for all subsequent manifestations of conscious life. Only the spectrum of natural daylight can generate this succession of transformations. The Aborigines would say that the grasses and leaves, as well as the flesh that feeds on them, preexist within the 'dream of light'. Their creation myth acknowledges the intrinsic power of light. 'All living things are borne in the womb of the great rainbow serpent.'<sup>2</sup>

*Because Indo-European language dictates that we express all our thoughts in past, present, or future tense, we have the notion that time is an abstract backdrop moving in one direction, like the hands of a clock, from past to future.*

The entire earth with the sky and space are part and parcel of a homogeneous living entity in the eyes of an Aborigine.

Whether it be sunlight, gravity, rocks, or trees, every distinguishable energy, form, or substance has both an objective and a subjective expression, or, as the Aborigines say, 'Each has its own Dreaming.' The Western world denies an internal or subjective consciousness to all things and creatures except humans. The rest of nature, we believe, has no dreaming and consequently we feel justified in cutting down trees, gouging the earth, and killing and enslaving animals as if they were all empty forms. In denying the universe an internal life we imprison

1. Robert Lawlor, *Voice of the First Day*, pp. 36–7.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 38.





*'Uluru' Ayers Rock  
Central Australia*



*'Uluru' Ayers Rock, and accommodation/hotels in the foreground*



*Australian aboriginal playing the Didgeridoo*



*Australian aboriginal rock cave paintings*



our own awareness, so that we live in only the shallow surface of our world. Science used to view the internal in the same rational, material way as it did the external. Recently, though, theoretical physicists have described the subatomic world as if it were a vast thought process or mind. This new approach may increase our sensitivity to the consciousness in all things.<sup>3</sup>

During their leisure hours they try to attune themselves to the vibrations and consciousness of the world around them, a world which is seemingly dead in Western eyes.

An Aboriginal elder commented, 'Unless whiteman learns to enter the dreaming of the countryside, the plants, and animals before he uses or eats them, he will become sick and insane and destroy himself.'

I once visited a huge standing rock formation at sunset, in a glowing red canyon outside Sedona, Arizona, with a man of the Cherokee tribe, Willy Whitefeather. When we arrived he sat down directly facing stones and played a lilting melody on his flute. Later, he said that stones have silicone crystals inside them, through which they listen! 'They are like lonely old people, standing and waiting to be sung to. Our people have always sung songs of admiration to the qualities of strength, beauty, and endurance that stones bring into the world....They are tired and lonely now because the white world has become so blind and selfish. They live in a hollow, unsung world.'<sup>4</sup>

The concept of space in the mind of these original dwellers of this vast land,

open to space, the sky, and the oceans, has a different meaning. It is consciousness, not distance. Like the modern scientist and as Vedanta sees it, the Aborigines consider space as invisible and indivisible.

Space, in our conventional awareness, is basically felt as distance, the empty interval separating objects. Our notion of space depends on our notion of time, which is necessary to measure distance. Hence most of the words we use to describe space, such as long and short, are also used to describe time.

Aborigines do not perceive space as distance. Space for them is consciousness, and, like consciousness, space is divided into two modes. The perceptible, tangible entities in space are like the conscious mind, and the invisible space between things corresponds to the unconscious mind. The term *unconscious* is misleading: the unconscious mind is always conscious; it is a continuum of dreaming. In Western culture, the presence and activity of the unconscious is obvious only during sleep and dreams. For the Aborigines, the unconscious mind is continuous and ever-present, permeating all levels of existence, just as space invisibly fills everything from galaxies to the interior of the atom. The conscious mind is like the things of this world: appearing and disappearing, alternating between wakefulness and sleep, between life and death.

The visible actuality of a form exists simultaneously with its invisible potential, just as the conscious perception exists simultaneously with the flow of the unconscious. Similarly, the potential of the seed and the actuality of the plant appear to follow one another in sequence, as day follows night. From the perspective of the Dreaming, though, day and night exist simultaneously as the

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-9.

4. *Ibid.*

opposite sides of a spinning sphere.<sup>5</sup>

This forms the background for this vast and immensely large island-continent which is replete with contradictions geographically, physically, ecologically, culturally and spiritually. The Aboriginal people were very highly spiritual without any idea of God or a philosophy as we know of it generally. Their spirituality is the natural outcome of their close relationship with nature which is pulsating with energy and consciousness. Man, animals, plants, rocks, rivers—all have been woven into a single beautiful tapestry, each inalienated from the others. It is said that in the far distant past the South Pole was one large mass of land. At one time, as it happens from time to time, the earth-plates moved dramatically and an enormous piece of land got cut off from the motherland, leaving the

its long coastline this island-continent (Australia) is, surprisingly though, mostly desert. Arable and habitable places are along the coasts. The first inhabitants roamed freely over the length and breadth of the land. Except for some of the most poisonous snakes in the world and killer-spiders this country does not have any ferocious wild animals. The mild-natured people mixed freely with the mild-natured emus, kangaroos, wallabies and others in the really unfriendly natural surroundings, till the enterprising and more unfriendly explorers from the West touched its shores. Apart from Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, Australia has no immediate neighbours. Isolated and cut-off from the rest of the world, Australia with its strange land-formations and animals remained unique and unparalleled in the history and geography of our planet.

*The Western world denies an internal or subjective consciousness to all things and creatures except humans...[so] we feel justified in cutting down trees, gouging the earth, and killing and enslaving animals as if they were all empty forms....In denying the universe an internal life we imprison our own awareness, so that we live in only the shallow surface of our world.*

Antarctica behind. It pushed itself forward and upward to the north. During the head-long march onward one big chunk got separated, stopped moving and settled itself on the oceanfloor to become the Australia of today. Other small pieces floated northward and formed the many island-nations like Fiji, New Zealand, Indonesia, etc. That part of the vagrant land which continued to surge forward clashed with the Asian continent with such force that the ocean floor was pushed high up to form the Himalayan ranges of today, behind which nestles the sub-continent of India.

Cradled by the three oceans lapping at

It was the loneliness, of course, which enabled Australia to slumber for so many centuries, while much aggressive history was being forged elsewhere, while great adventures were being undertaken in the cause of religion and sometimes just plain greed, while civilizations were progressively being nourished, prospering and declining.

During all that time and through millennia more, the occupiers of the unknown continent were the Aboriginals. They had arrived, in at least two waves but probably more, at least 40,000 years ago, maybe even 70,000 years ago.

Where they came from has long been the subject of archaeological detective

5. *Ibid.*, p. 40.



work and argument; various theories about different waves of Aboriginal migration have nominated parts of Africa, south China, northern Japan, southern India, a group of islands in the Bay of Bengal and New Caledonia as possible starting points for the journeys.<sup>6</sup>

Anyway, they were the only known indigenous people of this continent.

The first time foreigners or non-indigenous people touched the soil of this original land-structure has been recorded as the 1420s when

...the Chinese eunuch Zheng He, who commanded trading fleets of 300 ships and 27,000 men, and did a little exploring and pillaging on the side, may have visited Australia. It has been written in China that Zheng He, a man of massive girth, once landed on a great southern land, where he walked for weeks into central deserts, accompanied by a party of astronomers, seeking to make a clear reading of the stars.<sup>7</sup>

The first settlement or colony of Europeans happened only centuries later, as late as 1788, when the British, shipped of their American colonies, pummelled through the seas in search of fresh land. Captain James Cook ended up with the discovery of Australia. Soon a penal colony was established in 1788 in the place which was called and is even now known as New South Wales. The land had to be inhabited. So people—men, women and children—justifiably and unjustifiably labelled as convicts were bundled into ships and transported across the oceans. The Aborigines' lives changed. The original serenity, and peacefulness of this country were gone forever.

The original-land-dwellers received the newcomers with open arms and welcomed them with warmth and pleasure. But soon things happened. They were attacked, tormented and exterminated almost entirely to non-existence in places like Tasmania by the new settlers. The land became a colony of the British and remains so even today though loud rumblings are heard, under the thin veneer of the surface, of the clamourings for an independent nation. Detested, tortured and murdered, the helpless people of the earth lost their identity, and those who remained alive escaped into the wilderness.

Their 'sacred sites' were confiscated and desecrated by cities and industrial complexes. Their children were taken away from them and put under 'safe custody' or 'adopted' by the Whites, thus forcibly 'civilized' through educational institutions. Indoctrination of their ancient heritage was done by implanting Christianity and 'Westernism' in their innocent minds. Alcoholism was a suicidal trait created and cultivated among them to keep them helpless and under servitude. It is a great menace even today. Swamiji's heart would have bled seeing their plight. Unfortunately Swamiji did not touch this land, neither did his brother monks. We in Australia got only echoes of the call of Vedanta through his monastic brethren of a later age. But he worked in very strange ways.

It has been recorded by Swami Yogeshananda of Chicago as was narrated to him by 'Swami B. of Belur Math', that a young Australian by name James Wale had vision of 'an Indian ascetic'. He (Wale) was 'a heavy drinker and a debauchee'. But the thought flashed through his mind, 'This must be a yogi. The meaning of his appearance to me can only be that he wants me to change my way of life.' One word accom-

6. *Bicentennial Diary*, p. 5.

7. *Ibid.*



panied the vision—'Vivekananda'.<sup>8</sup> This was in 1925. That set him to go in search of material which would take him to the yogi. At last he came upon a copy of the *Raja Yoga* in a Sydney library. This led him to Belur Math, Calcutta. After long negotiations and ardent pleadings Swami Shivananda, then President of the Ramakrishna Math, accepted him as his disciple giving him the name of Viveka Chaitanya. But the strange food and unfamiliar climate of Calcutta shattered his health and he had to come back to Australia where he worked and lived till his death as a Brahmachari doing the work of Swamiji, spreading his ideals and putting them into practice. It is never late for good things to come. Vedanta never becomes out-dated. Swamiji's utterances will take many centuries to unfurl themselves to their full glory, extent and import. So there is hope, there is time.

Today the situation in Australia, in every field, is new and fresh. Many of the indigenous people and the Whites and other migrant communities are awakening to the fact that it is high time to make amends for the damage already done and so also to work toward a bright future starting at least from the year 2000. The country is too young, almost an infant according to historical standards. But that is also a great blessing. There is no power, ancient cultural history or social norms, to pull her backwards, nor is there any traditional burden carried down through generations to impede the speed of her progress. The pasture is fresh and fertile. The future is clean and open. The way is clear. Absorbing lessons from the ancient traditions and cultures that have migrated into this country, if Australian society is prepared to build up a culture of its own, that will be a great blessing and a

unique contribution to humankind as a whole.

Reverberations of a new awakening are resounding in the air. Interfaith meetings, dialogues and attempts at finding one canopy under which all religious faiths can find equal or adequate accommodation are afoot seriously and forcefully. Swamiji's idea about a universal religion, 'if there is ever to be a universal religion', is that,

It must be one which will have no location in place or time; which will be infinite like the God it will preach,...which in its catholicity will embrace in its infinite arms, and find a place for every human being from the lowest grovelling savage not far removed from the brute to the highest man towering by the virtues of his head and heart almost above humanity, making society stand in awe of him and doubt his human nature,...which will have no place for persecution or intolerance in its polity, which will recognize divinity in every man and woman, and whose whole scope, whose whole force will be centred in aiding humanity to realize its own true, divine nature.<sup>9</sup>

That is the ideal, the ultimate goal to be reached. But, on the other hand there are many lower ideals to be attained and Australia is aiming at some of them. The call for a multicultural approach and pluralism in religion has been sounded. 'Mere plurality is not pluralism', writes Diana Eck, an eminent Harvard professor of Asian religions. 'Pluralism is an attempt to come to terms on the plurality in a positive way.' In a closed seminar of the Heads of Faiths held in 1993 in Melbourne when we were dis-

8. Swami Yogeshananda, 'Australia and Vedanta, *Vedanta for East and West*, no. 163 (1979).

9. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 1, p. 19.



cussing about the possibility of an amiable co-existence of and healthy understanding between the different religious faiths, the Heads of the other religious traditions were using the word 'tolerance'. The paper from the Hindu viewpoint advocated the usage of 'acceptance' in its place, as Swamiji would have it. There was an immediate positive response, and throughout the rest of the day the word 'acceptance' was used whenever we had to refer to religious tolerance. Fortunately, the recently held World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago has turned the attention of most of the thinkers in the religious field and a few in the media toward the young Cyclonic Monk, Swami Vivekananda. Today let Swamiji's words echo and re-echo in the hearts and minds of all Australians,

*'Unless whiteman learns to enter the dreaming of the country side, the plants, and animals before he uses or eats them, he will become sick and insane and destroy himself.'*

*—An Aboriginal elder*

I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration but we accept all religions as true.<sup>10</sup>

In mere tolerance there is a tinge of condescension, superior attitude, whereas when it is conjoined with acceptance as well, all are taken on an equal footing to one's own religion. Let us hope that, in not too distant a future the sincere efforts on the part of some prominent religious leaders and heads of prestigious religious institutions to study, understand and accept the other religions bear fruit and establish a beautiful

harmony in the relationship between the numerous religious communities that have come to this country from almost all parts of the world as also with the aboriginal spirituality that has been functioning here through millenia.

Education is the cleanest, surest and most effective medicine for all the ills of the nation. In fact, people have been receiving education in the academic institutions according to a common curriculum meant to fill their brains with facts and pieces of information, but not for preparing them to face the problems of life. Swamiji asks, 'What is education?'—He then answers:

Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making, assimilation of ideas. If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library....If education is identical with information, the libraries are the greatest sages in the world, and encyclopaedias are the Rishis.<sup>11</sup>

Still, because of education along the existing lines a sense of awareness about their innate power, their legitimate rights and the impetus to carve out and preserve a better way of thinking and living for the rising generation have cropped up in many of them. There is a long way to go, but the path is clear—to bring out the infinite 'possibilities' and 'essences' from the inside of man and channelize them toward the goal. To quote Swamiji again—

Men are taught from childhood that they are weak and sinners. Teach them

10. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

11. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 302.

that they are all glorious children of immortality, even those who are the weakest in manifestation. Let positive, strong, helpful thought enter into their brains from very childhood. Lay yourself open to these thoughts, and not to weakening and paralyzing ones. Say to your own minds, 'I am He, I am He'. Let it ring day and night in your minds like a song, and at the point of death declare: 'I am He'. That is truth; the infinite strength of the world is yours.<sup>12</sup>

Australia today is struggling in the throes of discovering her true identity, her own place in the world. Out of this struggle, we can see, will emerge a beautiful society, clean and neat, fresh and new—a society that will be Australia's own.

It is highly interesting to note that, according to recorded facts<sup>13</sup> Vedanta and Swamiji first came to this highly chauvinistic country through women. Sister Avabhamia was a Swedish lay (original name unknown), educated in Sweden, who 'avowed herself a disciple of Swami Vivekananda and was somehow in touch with Swami Abhedananda'. While in Seattle, Washington, she claims to have had a vision of 'the Divine Ramakrishna' sometime in 1907 and got the instruction, 'Take the message of messages, the truth of truths, and go to the children beyond the seas, preach freedom unto them, such freedom from worldliness as is had in the Oneness with God, and see I shall be with thee.' She took Australia and New Zealand to be the area indicated and told Swami Abhedananda about it. He, it is said, told her he was 'glad we were going to the colonies and that he would give us all the help and guidance he could.' Credible or not, the Sister went around Australia and started a magazine,

*Star of the East*, and conducted meetings giving hundreds of lectures and discourses. No mention about her has been seen in the archives of the Ramakrishna Order yet, but some editions of the magazine have been traced to libraries in Sydney.

To cite one more incident of like nature we come to one Mrs. Elise Pickett, a lady from Adelaide, South Australia. She was highly praised by the Theosophical Society 'as a capable leading light in its work', but later she left it to follow Vedanta. She was known as Sister Haridasi and is said to have been in contact with the Swami Shivananda, Sri Ramakrishna's disciple, at Ceylon and

*Let us hope that in not too distant a future the sincere efforts on the part of some prominent religious leaders...will bear fruit and establish a beautiful harmony in the relationship between the numerous religious communities...as also with the aboriginal spirituality that has been functioning here through millenia.*

got many instructions from him. She is also said to have met Swami Vivekananda at least once. It is reported that she preached Vedanta in Australia.

And, in 1982, it was Sri Sarada Math, the women's Order of the Ramakrishna Movement that started a permanent Centre on this continent sending its nuns to start the work. Swamiji always emphasized on the uplift of the masses and women. Australian women have always lagged behind the men in every field of activity. They never were given equal status or equal pay, equal recognition or acceptance of their talents. This Society has always been dominated by the male. But the women are now raising their voice, sad to say, only to be competitive to the men and to be 'granted' equal oppor-

12. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 87.

13. 'Australia and Vedanta'.



tunities. Both Swamiji and later Gandhiji very highly appreciated the unique qualities inherent in women—qualities like true motherliness, which is synonymous with power and control over others. Hence, says Swamiji,

Therefore do I say that though outwardly there may be differences between men and women, in their real nature there is none.

To quote Swamiji again,

It is very difficult to understand why in this country (*The allusion was to the then prevalent system in India; but strangely enough it is aptly applicable to the present-day Australia* [Italics not Swamiji's] so much difference is made between men and women, whereas the Vedanta declares that one and the same conscious Self is present in all beings. You always criticize the women, but say, what have you done for their uplift? Writing down Smritis etc., and binding them by hard rules, the men have turned the women into mere manufacturing machines! If you do not raise the women who are the living embodiments of the Divine Mother, don't think that you have any other way to rise.<sup>14</sup>

And he continues,

That country and that nation which do not respect women have never become great, nor will ever be in future. The principal reason why your race has so much degenerated is that you had no respect for these living images of Shakti. Manus says, 'Where women are respected

there the gods delight, and where they are not, there all works and efforts come to naught.' There is no hope of rise for that family or country where there is no estimation of women, where they live in sadness.<sup>15</sup>

Let the women first think that they are human beings and behave with human dignity and human grandeur. Then they are to remember that they are citizens of this young beautiful country and are participants in the creation of a mighty power into which she has to be nurtured and helped to grow, thus contributing a valuable chapter to the history of the world. Thirdly, the idea of being women should come up, which would make them conduct themselves with self-respect, stateliness and refinement. Then they will find their right place in human society. Men as well as women, their country as well as every other country, will pay them honour and respect. That is Vedanta. That is Swamiji's vision for the women of this country.

Today, Australia is just ripe, receptive and ready to take in Swamiji's ideas. Already echoes of his message are resounding even in many of the remote parts of this land. From the orders that we get for the publications of the Ramakrishna Order, we have been sensing the pulse-beat going up and up from nothingness to slow rhythm, and there is every indication all around that it is gaining pace to reach a perfect healthy rhythm in the years to come.

Hail, Australia, hail to thee! A bright and glorious future along the lines chalked out by Swamiji awaits thee. Onward, forward, march on. □

14. *Talks with Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1990), pp. 324–5; also: *The Complete Works*, vol. 7, p. 214.

15. *Ibid.*, *Talks*, p. 326; *Complete Works*, p. 215.

## Swami Vivekananda's Contributions

VIVEK THAKKAR (16 YEARS), AUSTRALIA

Swami Vivekananda...A man, an incarnation in his own right, added a vibrant and new perspective to religious principles. This charged the morals, ideas and thoughts of people with the idea of the Atman, the Soul. Again, in the mere thirtynine years Swami Vivekananda resided on the face of the Earth, his contribution to the religious harmony of the world is incomparable.

Swami Vivekananda taught that each soul, each of us, possesses the power to shape our fate or destiny. We needn't be afraid of anything in life. A truly strong person believes in this idea. No problem can defeat our Power, as we are infinite souls and can never die. Swamiji once stated, 'Good is Life, evil is death.' He is not an atheist who does not believe in God, but he is an atheist who does not believe in himself.

Swamiji spent most, if not all, of his life spreading the Religion from which he had found Peace—that of Vedanta. Vedanta is a Spiritual Truth, its essential teaching being infinite and eternal.

To become free, we must give up attachment to all worldly concepts, including that of heaven, and take up the journey of spiritual life—to continue struggling and eventually reach the infinite, the Atman or Self, whose nature is pure and perfect. Different people are at different stages, yet all are basically godly.

Swamiji taught on the basis of his own experience that there were four yogas by which a soul can attain Freedom. The first of these is Karma Yoga. In this the mind is purified by means of duty or work. This

results in strengthening our moral powers and creates vairagya, non-attachment. Bhakti Yoga, the second, concentrates on our innermost self, God. Next is Raja Yoga. This is a discipline where we learn about God through meditation and concentration. Last is Jnana Yoga. Here the person meditates reminding the soul of its real nature and that the Atman is the only reality. All these Yogas are summarized through four Sanskrit words—1) Abhaya, Fearlessness; 2) Ahimsa, Non-violence; 3) Asanga, Non-attachment; 4) Ananda, Bliss, eternal joy.

Religious Unity became an important part of Religion when Swamiji added his own views to enhance our knowledge of the subject. All religions are united in the sense that they all have one goal to achieve—to become Free, to become one with God, and to end our life where it started in God. A new concept was suddenly offered to all humanity, where all religions led to one Universal Path and all the religions represented different paths meeting at the same destination.

As it is clearly evident, Swami Vivekananda is a great contributor to the religious harmony of our society. His thoughts and ideas provided the human race with much hope, implanting us with spiritual concepts that will ensure growth for centuries to come. Swamiji's life was one of endless toil and challenges, but he rose and conquered everyone of them. 'If you ever feel afraid of anything, always turn around and face it. Never run away.' □



# Some Meditation Practices in Australia Today

ERIC MURPHY

*This an interesting sketch of the present religious atmosphere in Australia. Mr. Murphy, a longtime friend of our Order and a disciple of Swami Prabhavananda, the founder of the Vedanta Society, Hollywood, now stays in Australia.*

Today the world is witnessing two simultaneous mental currents growing in opposing directions. One is external and draws our attention outward. This is all the refined technology such as the computer internet, satellite television, the telephone, videos and instant news. These services focus our attention on what is essentially outside information. A stockbroker or computer operator may have more concentration than a saint, but this kind of focus will not make that person spiritual or even necessarily successful. The second mental current is people's desire to look within for answers to life's questions; to seek that peace 'that passeth understanding'. The second current is the search for the inner Self or personal God. It is a search for love and joy, for harmony with all existence. Paradoxically, one sees many young Australians enthusiastically embracing both currents. The meditation room and the video machine are side by side. One may attend a film festival one week and a Vipassana retreat the next.

It is interesting to look at some of the meditation techniques popular in Australia today. Of course, the majority of spiritual seekers remain in the fold of the organized religions; all well represented in Australia. For example, there are orthodox Hindu and Buddhist temples in all major cities, as well as Moslem mosques. The emphasis of this paper will be on those groups and teachers outside of traditional religion. Most of these groups are asking us to meditate, God or no God.

The twentieth century has been a bumpy ride for Australia and the world. At the turn of the century, Australia, along with Argentina, had one of the world's highest standards of living. However, the First World War, or Great War as it is called here, caused vast disruptions to Australian society. Many young men would fight and die in distant fields of Europe and the Middle East. Australians had not recovered fully from the war years when the Great Depression began and was only ended by the Second World War. After the ignominious fall of Singapore, Australia was under constant threat of a Japanese invasion. Darwin was bombed. A Japanese submarine entered Sydney Harbour. In fear of more fear, Australians were given scant news of the war. Even after the Japanese were defeated, rationing remained for some time and the soldiers took some years to come home.

Prosperity returned in the fifties, but by the mid-sixties the Vietnam War was causing social and political disruptions at home. Eventually, in the early seventies, Prime Minister Whitlam pulled Australia out, but then he himself was ousted by the Governor General in what amounted to a bloodless coup. Despite the popularity of the Labour Government in the last twelve years, real wages and subsequently the standard of living have fallen steadily. It is now beyond the dream of many Australians to own their own home or buy a new car. All these events have left the public a little shaken and insecure. Desiring some stability, some un-



changing reality, many have gone outside their traditional faiths to seek methods of nurturing their spiritual lives and enhancing their chances for a happy existence.

The range of meditation practices in Australia goes from the pure Vedanta of Nisargadatta Maharaj to the aloneness of an aboriginal walkabout. There are the Australian inspired teachings of Barry Long's 'Inner Me'. One can take the psychological plunge into Osho Dynamic meditation or experience the peace and silence of a Vipassana retreat. It is common practice here to join a meditation group or take a yoga class. Meditation and yoga are socially acceptable like sport or theatre. A close look at some of these meditation practices will reveal their differences and similarities. The goal of them all seems to be inner peace and joy, with or without God.

One popular method is Osho Dynamic. Its founder, Rajneesh, believed that westerners are not fully ready to meditate and need to clear out their mental baggage first. In dynamic meditation this is accomplished in five steps. Firstly, a group of aspirants sit together quietly and concentrate on their breathing rhythm. Then they are supposed to make some noise for ten minutes; even yelling, screaming or crying. After this cathartic release of the pent up emotions, they spend ten minutes chanting a sufi mantra, which calms them down. Next the fourth step involves fifteen minutes called the 'Gurdieff Stop'. Each person stands still with his hands in the air and watches silently. The fifth and final step involves free form dance, the practitioner giving physical expression to the energy level attained. According to one Osho teacher, people invariably feel better at the end of a session; lighter and more joyful.

At the other end of the scale are the teachings of Nisargadatta Maharaj, another

Indian teacher who never visited Australia but has a small following here. Nisargadatta's central theme is pure Vedanta. The mind must be stilled and transcended, revealing one's true immortal self. Constant vigilance is required. The mind must turn away from the world and NOT be allowed to wander. As an aid, unselfish, desireless action is encouraged. Renunciation is central to Nisargadatta's teachings. Without renunciation of the false, meditation will be useless.

Like Rajneesh, Nisargadatta Maharaj said that most people come to sadhana with their bodies, brains and minds in such a jumble that formless attention to the soul is quite beyond them. However the similarities end here. Nisargadatta requires his students to continually discriminate between the real and the unreal. Memory, imagination and anticipation of the future are to be discarded and the mind focused on 'I am'. In absolute stillness the truth is revealed within, resulting in love and freedom from bondage. The sadhana itself is only a vessel, which is to be filled to the brim with earnestness. The aspirant must be ever alert and watchful in meditation. The method is simply to still the monkey mind and let the truth unfold.

Somewhat similar to Vedanta are the teachings of Australian, Barry Long. Out of his own inner struggle, Barry Long has evolved a unique method of meditation which he teaches worldwide and in Australia. Originally a writer and newspaper editor by trade, Barry Long has slowly developed a following which has grown and grown. Like Nisargadatta Maharaj, he asks people to discard the false and let the truth reveal itself naturally. To do this, one must practise quiet meditation and come to know the 'inner Me', as he calls the soul. A comfortable posture and alert, sober mind is required. Distracting thoughts must



be traced back to their mental source and discarded. The lower self consisting of lust and greed must be destroyed for the real man or woman to emerge. The 'inner Me': of beauty, peace, joy and love will be revealed in time and a new happiness unfold. Only when this new nobility has been established will a person's relationships with others and the world succeed.

Barry Long declares that we have no right to remain unhappy. By clinging to our miseries we sour the world around us. The inner 'Me' must be realized for a real happiness to begin. His outlook is not other worldly. He wants to see men and women in harmony NOW. Only when the noble man emerges can women themselves be complete. A lot of Barry Long's emphasis is on male-female relationships. He is a spiritual counselor as well as meditation teacher. He often teaches in a group, and the students experience a kind of consciousness raising. He has a distinguished and devoted following. He is well respected in Australia.

Around the world and in Australia, interest is increasing in Vipassana meditation practice. Vipassana was introduced here by a Burmese, S. N. Goenka. Goenka maintains that no degree of external control will solve all our problems. Frustration, restlessness and disquiet plague most people at times. Real security lies in the attainment of a mental state where we are not dependent on outer circumstances for our equanimity.

Vipassana, in the ancient Pali language means 'to see things as they really are'. To do this, to get to the starting block of the spiritual marathon, certain moral precepts are necessary. Absolute sobriety, truthfulness, harmlessness, and the practice of continence during sadhana are the vital weapons to begin the battle. Needless to say, this eliminates the majority of us; but nevertheless many Aussies are ready to 'give it a

go'.

Vipassana meditation starts by concentrating the mind on the natural rhythm of the breathing cycle. Eventually the mind calms down and the next step, of observing the sensations throughout the body and mind, begins. The aspirant learns not to react and to understand the changing nature of these. By understanding what is ephemeral, a sense of equanimity is developed. A permanent sense of being will be perceived in the deeper consciousness.

The entire practice of this meditation is to train and nurture a healthy mind which can lead to a happy, useful life. The more the technique is practised, the greater the freedom from misery and the closer one approaches the goal of full liberation. Although Vipassana is not a sect or religion, the tradition is clearly Buddhist, without requiring an overt conversion. Vipassana meditation centres exist in all the states of Australia.

The Vaishnava tradition is kept up in Australia by the Hare Krishna group who became established some decades back. They maintain an ashrama in northern New South Wales and centres in the major cities. An exuberant form of meditation is practised in kirtan parties with chanting of 'Hare-Krishna'. Through constant chanting of the Lord's name, love and devotion are awakened. The group is now well respected in Australia and a bit quieter. Many have raised their children in this tradition and a new generation of Australian Vaishnavas is emerging.

A lady, Gurumayi Chidvilasananda, heads the Siddha Yoga Meditation Ashrama in Sydney. She propounds the teachings of Swami Muktananda. Muktananda lived in America. Gurumayi teaches a meditation based on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. By



steps, the student is led through the phases of correct posture, proper breathing and mantra repetition. Later, one goes deeper into the dynamics of the mind. The method can awaken the hidden power of the kundalini as the practitioner advances. The final goal: a focused and still mind. Unlike the stockbroker mentioned in the introduction, this focus is internal: resulting in peace and harmony. The Siddha Yoga Meditation Ashrama is basically Hindu. Events like Guru Purnima, the first full moon in July, are observed.

Followers of Sri Ramakrishna are found in small groups scattered around Australia. In Sydney there is a Sarada Math with Pravrajika nuns, some of whom lecture as far away as Perth. The new Hindu Temple in Brisbane, opened last year and dedicated to Ganesha, has a side shrine with Sri Ramakrishna's image. A few initiated devotees in the Ramakrishna tradition keep in touch across Australia. Meditation practices are personal and private. The method is taught by the guru. No Swami is here permanently. An aspirant may have to go to Belur Math for initiation. From Perth, this will not be much farther away than Sydney. Swami Vivekananda asked us to practise all the yogas: knowledge, love, concentration, and work. One can see all of these yogas in the different meditation systems already mentioned. So a follower of Sri Ramakrishna has no trouble fitting in here.

Lastly, a look at the Australian Aboriginal spiritual practice will reveal some aspects of what is possibly the world's oldest religion. Carbon dates from cave printings of religious themes reveal that aboriginal culture was well established some 40,000 years back. Aboriginal 'Dreaming', the divinity of nature and the spirituality of the land, going 'walkabout', reincarnation: these themes remained con-

sistent until the white man arrived and survive today. I would say that aboriginal meditation came in two forms. Going alone in the desert and communing with the spirit, or 'walkabout' is one. A corroboree, or group meeting, with chanting, song and dancing in imitation of animal ancestors is another. This second is reminiscent of the Osho Dynamic mentioned at the start. The music of the didgeridoo is a most soul-stirring and meditative sound. The animistic dancing is choreographed beautifully and the dancers seem entranced. Religious tradition and culture are all passed down in songs and chants. Maps were communicated by verses known as songlines describing the country. To the aboriginal, the world is divine. There is nothing that isn't sacred. Their meditation of the 'dreamtime' is meant to reinforce this reality.

We have looked at some of the popular meditation practices in Australia. It seems evident that they have a lot in common. Spirituality is like a science. Results are attained by following a method. As they say in the west, 'the proof is in the pudding'. A method that produces peace and harmony, making a better person, is certainly worthwhile. The different systems seem to suit the differences in personal outlook in a country that is now diverse, polyglot, multicultural and ebullient. I think it is a sign of vitality that so many Australians are practising some form of meditation today. □

Desire is a chain, shackled to the world, and it is a difficult one to break. But once that is done, there is no more grief and no more longing; the stream has been cut off and there are no more chains.

—*Buddhism* Sutta Nipata 948



## Swami Vivekananda's Contribution to Religious Harmony

MISS RUSHMEE CHAUHAN (16 years), AUSTRALIA

On Monday September 11, 1893, Swami Vivekananda participated in the Parliament of Religions. He opened with the words, 'Sisters and Brothers of America', which met with a loud applause. With just five words the Swami had united and bonded all people present. Though there were many different religions represented on that day, Swamiji had created harmony among all religions at that moment. He brought to the West a religion which did not preach the destruction of other religions but the harmony of all religions. While all other speakers talked about their own religions, Swamiji spoke about a religion which could belong to mankind. In all his speeches there was a consistent theme, this was universality.

Swami Vivekananda contributed to religious harmony with the words he spoke at the Parliament of Religions. He explained that all religions ultimately led to the same God. Regardless of what religion you were, Hindu, Buddhism, Jewish, Sikh, Jain, Islamic, or Christian you would finally reach the same universal God. He quoted two passages from the Indian scriptures. '*As different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take ... all lead to Thee.*' When he said this he meant that no matter what religion people were they would achieve the same goal. The second passage he quoted was, '*Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me.*' With these words he had

brought all the religions of the world together. Swami Vivekananda represented a religion which did not strive to convert people of other religions but which assisted in the clarification of people's thoughts and helped people gain a true recognition of their own religion and its goal.

Swamiji also said that a religion which is to be in the image of religious harmony must be one which is not confined to one country, time, place or type of people. It should be one which accepts all of humanity. This religion was Vedanta. Swami Vivekananda clearly stated that in it there would be no persecution or intolerance. The Parliament of Religions, of which Swami Vivekananda had been a part, had illustrated religious harmony. All nations and all religions had produced men and women of elevated and noble character. Therefore what each had contributed did not belong to one religion or nation but to the whole of mankind. Swamiji believed that those who thought that their religion was the utmost and that it should be the only religion were wrong. These were people who believed in the destruction of all religions except their own. They were not at all contributing to religious harmony. Swamiji's contribution to religious harmony was the ideal of *Assimilation, Harmony and Peace.*

Swami Vivekananda continued to believe and contribute to religious harmony in the years that followed. Later on he established many centres overseas with the help of his foreign disciples and followers. He

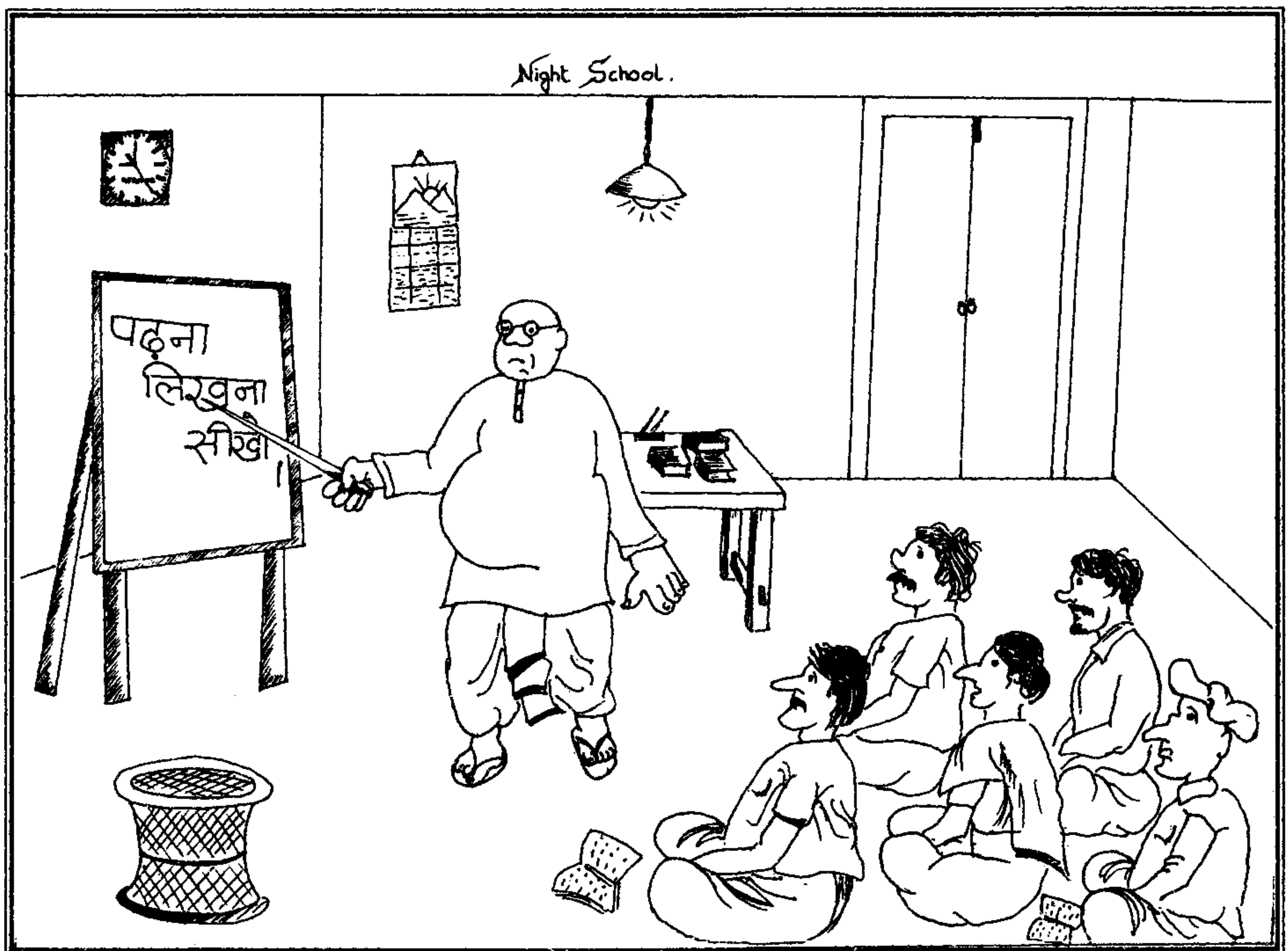
made further journeys to foreign countries including England.

Swami Vivekananda preached the same principles wherever he went. One such occasion was a lecture titled 'Is Vedanta the Future Religion?' delivered in San Francisco on April 8, 1900. He addressed the question of Vedanta as the universal religion. He said that all people were travelling to the same goal, the difference being that they were travelling along different paths. About Vedanta he said, *'It is not confined to any time and place, it is everywhere. Everybody knows this truth. The goal of the whole universe is that.'* He emphasized the importance of realization of unity and therefore of religious harmony. He stated that all religions preached the same principles but just put different names over them.

Swami Vivekananda realized that all religions said that people should be unselfish and love others. He said,

*'Throughout all religious systems and ideals is the same morality...Be unselfish, love others. One says, "Because Jehovah commanded." "Allah," shouted Mohammed. Another cries "Jesus".'* The reason why the Jews and Muslims believed in the same unselfish and loving nature was because their respective leaders preached this. By revealing this Swami Vivekananda expressed that the ideas of religion are universal. He has therefore revealed to us that all men may live in religious harmony through the practice of Vedanta, the common thread through all the religions.

Throughout his life Swami Vivekananda contributed to religious harmony. He not only lectured about this but he put his ideas into practice. Today Swami Vivekananda's work is still carried on by the societies he established. These societies still pursue his idea of religious harmony.





# The Spoilsport

L.B. AHUJA

Arise and awake to know,  
What and where you are.

Armed with knowledge and dedication,  
Attack your adversary, the ego,  
With the sword of Self-inquiry.

Beware of the foe,  
Equipped with your venal vasanas,  
Counsellor's guise he wears in defeat,  
And clothes in real-like colours,  
Seeming lights, shades,  
Inequities and impermanences.

With discerning thought,  
Doubt his pretensions,  
Scan his colours,  
And sever swift the snaring bond.

Undeterred by setbacks,  
Undelayed by small successes,  
Persist with your strokes and thrusts  
Till the duel is won.

With early resolve speed your victory,  
To enjoy more  
Life in fullness and grandeur.

Arise, awake and stop not,  
Till you laugh off the pranks of the spoilsport  
And ego-free join  
The cosmic sport of the Supreme.

# Inter-Religious Dialogue: Prospects and Possibilities

B.A. REDDY

*A crisp study in appreciation of inter-religious dialogues. The author is the Principal of Mary's Junior College, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh.*

We are today no longer exclusive in our approaches to the pursuit of inner life. Inter-religious dialogue has created great awareness of the points of similarity between one path and another. Increasing recognition of this fact is leading to the appropriation of insights from different religious modes, of both doctrine and *sadhana*. Thus, an attempt is made by seekers to be adaptive and accommodative in the course of their spiritual quest.

This has become possible today because not only thinkers but several sages and saints of our century have proclaimed the core of mystical religion to be the same in all faiths. There is what Aldous Huxley has popularised as 'Perennial Philosophy', the highest common factor of direct, mystical experience, as the core of all religions. Sri Ramakrishna's phenomenal experimentation in verifying and validating the truth of faiths is a historical event that has, so to say, initiated an authentic movement of mutual religious appropriation.

Within this framework comparative studies are emerging with remarkable frequency, affirming the common heritage of humanity's wisdom traditions. The contemporary scene, observed with objectivity, gives us some interesting facets of inter-religious faith as a phenomenon of our century. These are:

1. No faith can afford to be exclusive in these days of globalization. Increasingly global networks of media project a common programmatic content, which heavily influence people all over the globe. In fact, the former distinction between East and West are becoming largely outdated in terms of economy, media, etc. Therefore, in the field of faith also there is increasing recognition of the dissolving of frontiers and the establishing of areas of approximation.

2. Therefore, another important consequence is the attempt to find, even in areas where there was some conflict, modes of resolution and affirmation. The spirit is articulated by John Paul II in a beautiful way: pointing out that 'the relation between the Church and Hinduism and other religions of the Far East is so important', he says:

In Hinduism, men explore the divine mystery and express it through an endless bounty of myths and through penetrating philosophical insight. They seek freedom from the anguish of our human condition, either by way of the ascetic life, profound meditation, or by taking refuge in God with love and trust. The various schools of Buddhism recognize the radical inadequacy of this malleable world and teach a way by which men, with devout and trusting hearts, can become capable either of reaching a state of perfect liberation, or of attaining,



by their own efforts or through higher help, supreme illumination.<sup>1</sup> In these terms, there is now appreciation of the fact that each religion has something to offer to others without which the totality of human consciousness remains truncated. In other words, if devotion is the identity of one religion, then the path of service and charity could be that of another. Similarly, some religions emphasize the motherhood of God, a principle which is present but not accentuated in another. Thus, appropriation would mean balancing these facets so that an integral being emerges as the future model.

3. Inter-religious dialogue would also mean redefinitions of ancient texts. For instance, the yoga texts today are being reinterpreted in terms of the traditions of practical spirituality outside Hinduism and the classical yoga system. Increasing disenchantment with secular psychiatry is resulting in the formulation of more holistic systems of integration, and the details of the maps being drawn are based on extant spiritual maps. Thus, for the first time we have a communicative climate capable of fielding a rich spectrum of practical spirituality.

In this context, what Francis X. Clooney said about his study of the great Tamil text *Tiruvaimozhi* is applicable by extension to inter-religious implications of sacred texts. He says:

One inevitable conclusion of this life of argumentation is that when *Tiruvaimozhi* thus opens up truly new religious possibilities, there becomes likely a widening of that conversation created and

nourished by the acharyas over the centuries. Now that this text is available to a much wider audience inside and outside India, and is studied and appreciated even by people who have no specific links with, or commitments to, the Srivaishnava tradition as this has traditionally been understood, new insights into the drama and theology and pragmatic appreciations of the text will surely be harvested, in India and abroad.<sup>2</sup>

Obviously, what Clooney says is applicable to several texts and contexts. It is highly significant that such textual interpretation and interpretation of prophets of different religions is extensively being

...there is now appreciation of the fact that each religion has something to offer to others without which the totality of human consciousness remains truncated.

undertaken. We have, for instance, *The Yoga of St. John of the Cross* by Swami Siddheswarananda, *The Sermon on the Mount According to Vedanta* by Swami Prabhavananda, *Hindu View of Christ* by Swami Akhilananda. Indeed, it is highly significant, again, that the teachings of the greatest sage of modern India, Sri Ramakrishna, are recorded in a book called *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Obviously, the ideas crystallizing in the word *Gospel* are extensively operative today outside strictly Christian traditions. This is itself a pointer to a phenomenon inconceivable in earlier centuries.

Increasing adaptation of Hindu techniques of yoga and some important rituals

(Continued on page 142)

1. His Holiness John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*; London: Jonathan Cape, 1994; p.80.

2. Francis X. Clooney, *The Art and Theology of Srivaishnava Thinkers*; Madras: T.R. Publications, 1994; pp. 123-4.

## A Few Lines from Allahabad

When it came to my notice that *Prabuddha Bharata* is inviting readers' view, I decided to write something, to express my opinion.

In one word, it is superb. Even one who is not religious minded may become interested to read this magazine. Surely it is a medium to awake India—to awake India's religion and culture. And, of course, to simplify spiritual ideas in a matchless way.

In my personal life, from my early age I have seen my father and other elderly members of my family read *Prabuddha Bharata* with keen interest. Now my husband too, who is very busy in his professional life, eagerly reads it regularly. I am surprised at that, because I have not ever seen him read books except those on science and mathematics! My two sons also turn over the pages of *Prabuddha Bharata*, and have a special interest in 'Practical Vedanta'. The elder son has joined Indian Air Force just two years ago and my other son is a student of the B.Sc. course. They both have got a very practical as well as religious background, because we always encourage them to read good literature such as *Prabuddha Bharata* in addition to their text books.

Naturally they have developed a mental make up which harmonizes all their activities. Besides, my children have a very soft corner for the poor and needy, and render all possible help to them now and then.

Now about myself: I read each and every page with interest. 'Madhusudana Saraswati on the *Bhagavad-Gita*' has done a miracle to me. I have learnt by rote a number of *slokas* from the *Gita*, and am still going on. It has been possible only because I got a clear idea from the description and translation in the *PB*. It gives clear understanding of the *slokas*.

Yes, I must mention here that the quotations too in the *PB* are very interesting to my children and even their friends. So, please add more quotations in the *PB*.

In conclusion, I pray for a successful centenary celebration of the *Prabuddha Bharata*. Let us all try to do something to convert into reality Swamiji's ideas, Swamiji's Dream.

Moitree Gupta  
Allahabad, U.P.

Angels can fly because they take themselves lightly.

—Scottish saying



# The Mundaka-Upanishad

SWAMI SRIDHARANANDA

We are glad to introduce the following series of articles based on the discourses of the Swami on the inspiring Upaniṣad. Some years ago his talks on the Bhagavad-Gītā too were serially published in the PB. Readers found them easy to comprehend, informative, and practical. The present series also is as useful as the earlier one.

Swami Sridharananda is the head of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission Sevashrama, Lucknow.

## Introduction

Before studying the *Mundaka-Upaniṣad* it is necessary to have a proper understanding of what the Upaniṣads are, what is their place in our spiritual heritage, and how best to appreciate them and benefit ourselves by their study.

## Three Canons

The whole gamut of Vedantic literature has been divided into three principal groups, the *Prasthāna-traya*, the three canons, or directions to go on to the Vedantic Truth to fulfil the purpose of being born as human beings. The Vedas, including the Upaniṣads, constitute the first canon, the *Śruti-Prasthāna*. The *Brahma-Sūtra*, or the *nyāya-prasthāna*, is the second; and the *Bhagavad-Gītā* the third canon, or the *Smṛti-Prasthāna*. Since the Vedic literature is a huge mass which is almost impossible for one individual to master in one lifetime, the essential teachings of the Vedas were summarized in *sūtra* forms, aphoristic or abbreviated language, to help memorize them, of which only Bādarāyaṇa's *Brahma-Sūtra* survived. In this the abstraction of the Vedic ideas in suggestive words is collated in the most concise manner. After this second stage comes the third stage of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. This third canon practicalizes these ideas in our day-to-day life in a very graphic and elegant manner. It is told in the *Prasthāna-traya* how to develop the

capacity to penetrate the realm of darkness or ignorance in human life.

The Vedas with the Upaniṣads, the first canon, are collections of truths discovered by the ṛṣis. The ṛṣis were the *ṛk-draṣṭās*<sup>1</sup>—seers of *ṛk*, *ṛca*, or *ṛta*, which essentially means *satya*, truth, defined in the Upaniṣads as the never changing perennial Reality. The ṛṣis came face to face with and realized certain truths of the universe. They were normal human beings like us, with earnest one-pointed desire to know the truth. They were endowed with similar avenues of knowledge as we are, and they also possessed utmost sincerity and honesty—which shows that if we too are that much honest to ourselves, pure, and hard-working, we also can realize the truth in this very life.

## Knowledge—Three Stages

As we know, all human beings are endowed with five avenues of direct sense perception, *pratyakṣa-indriyaja-anubhūti*, viz. organs of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and touching. With these we directly communicate and interact with their respective

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1. *Ṛṣayo mantra-draṣṭāro na tu vedasya kartārah;*  
*Na kaścid-vedakartā ca vedasmartā caturbhujah.*

'The ṛṣis are seers of the *mantras*, not makers (creators) of *mantras*. None is a maker of the *mantras*; (even) the Four-armed one (i.e. Brahmā) is (only) a rememberer of the Veda.'



objects, viz. *śabda*, *sparsa*, *rūpa*, *rasa*, and *gandha* (auditory, tactual, visual, gustatory, and olfactory objects), consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly, and perceive objects of innumerable varieties.

Human beings are also endowed with intellect, and the eternal questions of 'why' and 'how' and 'what for' recur to them continually. Thus attempts were made to group and codify various perceptual observations regarding how things happen, why, what the causes and reasons are for such happenings, etc. So another level of concepts and principles was arrived at by tabulation, codification, and classification of experiences. Basing their thinking on the observed pattern, they made inferences to reach certain concepts concerning light, sound, touch, taste, smell, and also electricity, gravity and heat. In this way they followed a process which enables people to progress in opening the doors of knowledge. In our professional lives also we follow some principles and guidelines of those professions: for example, lawyers and doctors follow the principles of law and healthcare, respectively. This stage is called conceptual understanding, *jñāna-gocaratā* or *bauddhika siddhānta*. Merely for the sake of convenience in explaining, the two stages of perceptual observation and conceptual understanding are separately mentioned. But there are no watertight compartments as such. It is a simultaneous movement of the mind in the process of living and understanding.

The third stage of knowledge following perceptual observation and conceptual understanding is intuitional experience, which the Upaniṣads call *atīndriya-anubhūti*. This is based on the earlier two but goes beyond the parameters of the five gross senses. The most familiar homely example of this type of knowledge is found in mothers. Because of her deep concern for the welfare

of her child, the mother develops or is endowed with a special quality within herself by means of which she knows what is wrong with her child without taking the help of outer sense perception. Intimate friends also have such experiences. With sharp, one-pointed devotion to truth, the capacity to have intuitional experience can be developed to grow beyond the limitations of the physical self from which all men suffer.

We all have the capability to attain such realizations. So we should never think that the realization of those Vedic truths was possible only for the superhuman *ṛṣis*, and it is not possible for us ordinary mortals.

#### *Ṛṣis Discovered the Truth*

The *ṛṣis*, with their keen and untainted senses, observed Nature. As Nature fascinates everyone, they also were charmed by it. They observed the sunrise, the sunset, the waxing and waning of the moon, and the flow of the seasons, all following a particular pattern. What they saw in their natural surroundings inspired them and found expression through their utterances in poetic language. That is why in the Vedas are found praises, eulogies, and descriptions of Nature's forces. Slowly they discovered that the universe follows a particular system, nothing happens per chance, or accidentally; i.e. 'the world is not moving like the throwing away of a fistful of plums or nuts', says Śaṅkarācārya: '*na tu badara-muṣṭi-prakṣepa-vat*'. The *ṛṣis*, with their penetrative observations, moved towards conceptual knowledge and understood that a Supreme Being manages and guides all affairs of the world. They also saw a rhythm, a symphony, a synthesis in the cosmic affairs.

By their sincere desire to know the mysteries of life and nature, and by self-discipline, they managed to generate such an amount of energy within themselves that



they transcended the normal human limitations of the senses. An undisturbed one-pointed attention—*eka vṛtti, eka citta*—was attained by control over the modifications of the mind, which enabled them to sort out the mysteries puzzling them. The withdrawal of the mind from all external objects such as sights and sounds, and concentrating it on any object of study is called *saṁnyama*. We experience it, for example, when we are engrossed wholeheartedly in solving a problem. When *saṁnyama* is done to unfold the mysteries of the universe, the Ultimate Reality, and the origin of the self, we cross the veil of ignorance and experience objectlessness. We get the *atīndriya-anubhūti*, supra-sensate experience.

The ṛṣis went beyond the five sheaths—*annamaya, prāṇamaya, manomaya, vijñānamaya*, and *ānandamaya kośas*, i.e. sheaths of matter (body), vital force, mind, intellect, and ego, and were totally immersed in this experience. Then the Self and Reality were intuited as one: I and Brahman are essentially one. Names and forms deluded them no more. This was an indescribable experience: just as after eating a sweetmeat one can hardly describe exactly the experience in words, except symbolically or suggestively. When even ordinary experiences cannot be expressed accurately, then how can the realization of the Self be expressed, except by saying that it is the most blissful

experience? Through Self-realization alone is one satisfied thoroughly and completely.

Then the ṛṣis tried to find out the answer to a very perplexing question: I, as an entity, a separate unit, feel I belong to the world. I refer to myself as 'I' or 'me', and anything connected with me as 'mine'. What are these 'me' and 'mine'? The former approach was objective, analysing the world. The present one was the journey inside—to find out what is this individual and what is its relation to the cosmos. This was the subjective approach: to find out one's original nature; who, what and wherefrom am I; what is the principle of life and my relationship with the source of the universe. This enquiry led to the discovery of the self's original identity and the fact of its having emanated from the Supreme Being. The discoveries were declared in the *mahāvākyas*, the great teachings, sometimes referred to these days as the great equations: *ayam-ātma brahma*—this self is Brahman; *aḥam brahmāsmi*—I am Brahman, and similar others. Thus the ṛṣis discovered the formula through which the hows and whys, *katham* and *kim*, found their answers; a unified theory to answer all such questions in a rational way.

(to be continued)

Neither numbers, nor powers, nor wealth, nor learning, nor eloquence, nor anything else will prevail, but *purity, living the life*, in one word, *anubhuti*, realization. Let there be a dozen such lion-souls in each country, lions who have broken their own bonds, who have touched the Infinite, whose whole soul is gone to Brahman, who care neither for wealth, nor power, nor fame, and these will be *enough* to shake the world.

—Letter of Swami Vivekananda to E.T. Sturdy  
from New York dated 9th August, 1895

## Awakened India

*Awakened India* or *Prabuddha Bharata* is observing the centenary of its first publication. A hundred years in the life of a journal, specially in India, means much as journals here are found very short-lived.

*Prabuddha Bharata*, founded by Swami Vivekananda, has made a mark in the world of philosophy, religion, fine arts and culture. This is famous not only for academic discussion but also for giving a direction to better life and spiritual existence.

India was under foreign rule when *Prabuddha Bharata* was first published. Educated Indians in those days were slavishly imitating the West, and did not find anything worth mentioning in their own tradition and culture. They lost their identity and became westernized in taste and culture.

A good number of the traditionalists became mechanical observers of rituals, obsessed with casteism and don't-touchism. They lost the spirit of our culture and were satisfied with its bones and flesh.

Under the circumstances there was a unique appearance, and that was the advent of Sri Ramakrishna. He was born and brought up in the traditional atmosphere. But he was above all forms of sectarianism, casteism, fanaticism and boundaries. His broadness, wide acceptance and harmonious approach could find a bridge between the East and the West, the secular and the sacred, the finite and the infinite. He stood on the sound platform of his own realization, saw Truth directly and could

speak with a conviction which could remove doubts from the minds of the sceptics.

Narendranath approached Sri Ramakrishna as a sceptic, but became a believer. This metamorphosis was brought about by Sri Ramakrishna, who was unique in every way. Narendranath, the later Vivekananda, had the capacity and potentiality of a revolutionary figure, which he actualized through the grace of Sri Ramakrishna, his preceptor.

Vivekananda was a real international figure, who was proud of his motherland, culture and tradition, but was also aware of the greatness of others and advocated its acceptance and acquisition. Indian spiritualism in harmony with Western science and technology was his ideal, and he cried hoarse for its realization. He was a dynamic man with a dynamic vision, and he could work out a miracle.

Vivekananda roused India from her slumber, restored her lost identity and asked Indians to march forward, and stop not till the goal was reached.

*Awakened India* is the journal Swamiji established for propagating his view of dynamism, Indian spiritualism, Western science and culture and specially, to represent the spirit of awakened India.

Swamiji used to say, 'I am India.' His idea was a symbol of 'one world', 'one family', 'one humanity' and ultimately 'the



ideal of universal oneness'. This is what awakened India stood for.

Swamiji's addresses at the Parliament of Religions in 1893 gave India a place in the map of the cultural and spiritual world. India was awakened, national consciousness was roused and the Indian struggle for freedom got a fillip. Historians admit that Swamiji's ideas inspired both violent and non-violent patriots, though he himself was a non-political man. In this context we should not forget that Swamiji was never for aggressive nationalism. His nationalism was in harmony with internationalism.

Swamiji's concepts of 'potential divinity of each soul', 'service of man as service to God', 'man-making and character-building education', 'religion as realization or manifestation of divinity already in man', 'theism as a belief in one's own self', 'fearlessness', 'progress from lower truth to higher truth and not from error to truth' brought about a revolution in human thought and life, and India herself became full of life, dynamism and direction which resulted in the origin of modern India.

Rammohan Ray was, no doubt, an intellectual giant, truly an international with a vision of the harmony of the East and the West. But his appeal was confined only to the elite. He had no contact with the masses. Vivekananda saw India not through the scriptures alone but through his personal experience also as he moved as a wanderer through the length and breadth of India. He realized that poverty, illiteracy, and neglect of the masses resulted in the degeneration of India. For her awakening, the masses will have to be respected, their problems solved and the principle of 'unity in diversity' fruitfully applied. Swamiji could inspire Indians, specially the students and the masses, through his fiery speeches, which Rammohan lacked. Swamiji understood *māyā* as

a statement of fact and as a combination of space, time and causality, whereas Rammohan considered it to be world-negating and harmful for society as it encourages inactivism. Swamiji explained *māyā* in the Tantric way—as a real *śakti* (power) of Brahman.

Political leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, and cultural stalwarts such as Sri Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan have admitted Swamiji's influence on them. Rabindranath, who was not famous in 1902 when Swamiji left the world at the height of name and fame, has striking similarities of thought with Vivekananda in certain respects.

Sister Nivedita, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, inspired scientists (J.C. Bose and others), artists (Abanindranath and Nandagopal), litterateurs (Rabindranath and Dinesh Chandra Sen), historians (Jadunath Sarkar and others), patriots (Aurobindo Ghose and Bipin Chandra Pal). In this way the Indian renaissance in the nineteenth century was possible. So Swamiji may well be considered the central figure of the Indian renaissance. Of course, Sri Ramakrishna was working through him, as his ideas are in essence all of his preceptor's, who considered his dear disciple as non-different from himself. Swamiji's prophetic utterance about 'the rule of the toilers' either in Russia or in China could not even be foreseen by Karl Marx, the father of Socialism. Swamiji was aware of the merits and demerits of democracy and socialism, and now we can understand on the basis of our experience that he was perfectly justified. In democracy very often muscle and money are two important factors, and in socialism an individual loses his speciality and importance.

Practical Vedanta which Swamiji emphasizes and preaches is Vedanta in



practice. This Vedanta recognizes dualism, qualified monism and non-dualism as three steps in the march towards Truth. These are stages and true so far as they go, and stages can be lower and higher. Practical Vedanta preaches divinity of human beings and their dignity in being divine. It respects all religions, considers them true and opens its gates to all irrespective of caste, creed and religion. It liberates Vedanta from the limits of the forests and caves and brings it to the public and to the different fields of work. It removes the barriers of scared and secular and considers work as worship. As knowledge, work, devotion and meditation are pathways to Liberation, so service to man as service to God is a pathway. Thus religion becomes social and connected with social goodness.

These teachings bring value consciousness and reveal the real meaning and purpose of human life. These are again to be propagated and practised. Then alone the problems that are puzzling us in present day India will be solved and India will be really awakened.

Swamiji emphasized education as a key to the solution of different problems. For him education is the manifestation of perfection already in man and religion is its core. Education builds character and prepares

dignified human beings with self-confidence. People become value conscious through education and try to follow a value-oriented life. Moral degradation is a phenomenon today not only in India but also throughout the whole world. Scientific and technological development may remove economic poverty, but it cannot give any direction to a good human life. The scientific world-view excludes all questions of meaning and value of life and the world, and so has nothing to say to us regarding our vital needs. 'Merely fact-minded sciences make merely fact-minded people.' We expect more from Man who is essentially a divine being. This we can get if we are educated in Vivekananda's line. If we find perfect men, all human problems will be easily solved. Swamiji used to say—men, men, these are wanted, and then everything else will be ready.

For the reawakening and emancipation of India from inertial and stupor, we shall have to take up arms against the sea of troubles as valiant men and women, and in this respect Vivekananda will be our leader and guide. We should not stop till the goal is reached.

*Dr. Nirod Baran Chakraborty*  
*Calcutta*

Even the greatest fool can accomplish a task if it be after his heart. But the intelligent man is he who can convert every work into one that suits his taste. No work is petty. Everything in this world is like a banyan-seed, which, though appearing tiny as a mustard-seed, has yet the gigantic banyan tree latent within it. He indeed is intelligent who notices this and succeeds in making all work truly great.

—*Swami Vivekananda*



# Doorstep of the Universe

## 'HIRANYAGARBHA'

I turn my neighbours' welcome mats around,  
Then slip away and hope I'm not observed.  
In this I'm neither partial nor profound,  
I think of it as just a turn deserved.

One neighbour has a mat whose letters spell  
Not 'Welcome', not 'The Smiths', but 'Go Away';  
I've flipped that neighbour's mat around as well.  
My rounds create a local judgement day.

O India, thou sage old potentate  
Of causal law, please help us understand;  
Is this the way each simple twist of fate  
Is guided by your *karma's* gentle hand?

Did this world wait for us to make a sign  
And offer welcomes of our own design?

# A Great Leap Forward\*

RAJNI BAKSHI

*A small revolution is taking place in an obscure rural area of Rajasthan. Villagers, guided by a group of activists, are demanding that local functionaries be accountable to them, and remarkably, they are succeeding in taking the reins of government into their own hands.*

Picture the sandy compound of a school in a small village of Rajasthan. A wornout tent attempts to provide refuge from the blazing sun. Below it much of the village Thana has gathered for an event organized by the people, for the people, in which representatives of the government are reluctant participants.

This is a Public Hearing, called Jan Sunwai in Hindi, where people of several villages are exposing specific cases of corruption in local government works and demanding redress.

A public building has recently been repaired in the village, under a government programme for giving work to people. One person reads out the 'muster-roll', a record of the people who are supposed to have worked on this project. Soon there is an uproar among those gathered there. Many people whose names are on that muster-roll were not given even a day's work on that project.

So where did the money, allocated and spent on 'wages', go? The villagers demand to know who pocketed it and insist that it be returned to the village kitty. As the Hearing proceeds and more cases of fraud are uncovered, the government functionaries present there look more and more uncomfortable. The Block Development Officer

(BDO) offers explanations which sound more like excuses. He promises to take action against offenders.

Will such promises be fulfilled? At that moment this question, though important, is not predominant in most people's mind. To an extent the public hearing is an end in itself. It is an almost cathartic experience for people who have suffered in silence for years. Their pent up anger and frustration finds release at the Hearing.

Yet this is no kangaroo court, nor is it a summary trial of officials deemed guilty. This is a carefully controlled and judiciously managed exercise in seeking public accountability. The hearing at Thana was the fifth in a series of such meetings held around the town Bhim, in Rajsamand district of Rajasthan, between December 1994 and April 1995.

There are no 'star' personalities here leading a publicity oriented crusade against corruption in general. The participants and organizers are each other's neighbours. 'Our objective is not to suspend any government official but to get active control of people over their resources', says Aruna Roy, one of those people who helped to organize the hearings.

Given the pervasive despair about the problems of corruption, all over India, these public hearings are a revolutionary happen-

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\* Courtesy: *The Hindu*, Madras





*A villager has his say at the public hearing in Thana village of Rajasthan*



*The success of the public hearing has boosted the morale of these simple people*



ing. How did they come about? The answer to this question lies in the story of an innovative endeavour which has challenged not merely the government but also the, now much feted, 'market'.

This is the story of the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), whose nucleus is a unique family of activists who live in Devdoongri—a village on the Delhi-Ahmedabad highway some 40 kms. from Beawer city. The group consists of Aruna Roy, a former IAS officer who earlier worked with a large voluntary organization in Tilonia (Rajasthan); Shankar and Anshi Singh, who also worked in Tilonia; and Nikhil De, who earlier worked briefly in the tribal areas of western Madhya Pradesh.

In 1987 these activists moved to Devdoongri, where Shankar Singh had family links. Disillusioned with the parallel bureaucracy that many voluntary organizations become, they opted not to create any institutional structures or facilities. They live in a rented stone and mud house, similar to other houses in that village. Small research studies from the Ministry of Rural Development, help to provide their livelihood. This is further supplemented by contributions from a circle of middle-class friends and supporters who admire the Devdoongri endeavour.

Initially these activists got involved in the issue of minimum wages, which is not paid even on many government works. As people got successfully organized on this and other issues they felt the need for a sustained and a long term effort. Thus the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan was born on May 1, 1990. It is a joint initiative of the Devdoongri activists and several local villagers who enthusiastically emerged in leadership roles.

The constituents of the Sangathan see

themselves as underlings in the urban-oriented market economy. Employment in these villages is so scarce that most men migrate to the cities in search of work. The long term objective of the Sangathan is to find means of generating livelihood opportunities in its own area so that people do not have to migrate to cities.

With the new economic policy, introduced in 1991, as the market was given more free play this objective began to seem like a dream. They felt a need to intensify struggle in local creative ways that would also enhance the quality of daily life. The Sangathan thus collectively analysed the local markets and became convinced that 'there is no such thing as a "free market".' According to a note prepared by the Sangathan: 'The market is manipulated; and so far all manipulations have been in favour of business interests and against the poor. The question was whether the MKSS could use market mechanisms to manipulate it in favour of the poor?'

Thus the Sangathan itself became an entrepreneur and set up a Mazdoor Kisan Kirana (Provisions) Store. Members and friends of the Sangathan became shareholders by contributing Rs. 10 or Rs. 100 each as an interest free loan. The first kirana store opened in Bhim, in October 1992, with a capital base of Rs. 60,000 and had a turnover of Rs. 35 lakhs in the first year. It is run by members of the Sangathan, who receive a minimum wage, but is open to the general public.

The material gain of this enterprise, initially, was that it sold daily essentials at about 25 per cent lower rates than the rest of the market in Bhim. The other shop-owners first attempted to coerce the Sangathan's shop out of business. But when it continued to thrive, boldly announcing its low prices on a loud speaker, there was a 10 to 15 per



cent reduction in the prices of most kirana stores in Bhim.

The Mazdoor Kirana store still does roaring business because buyers know it offers them higher quality and unadulterated products. Subsequently two more such kirana stores have been opened by the Sangathan.

This success boosted the Sangathan's morale to an unprecedented high and expanded its range of possibilities thus leading to the Public Hearings. The rallying slogans for these hearings has been '*yeh kiska vikas—yeh kaisa vikas*' (whose development—what kind of development is this?)

The process began in June 1994 when the Sangathan took up the case of Kaladeh Gram Panchayat, near Bhim, where Rs. 12 lakhs had been sanctioned in one year under the '*apna gaon—apna kaam*' (our village—our work) scheme. This scheme is supposed to promote people's responsibility and involvement in the development of their area while also diminishing bureaucratic interference.

However, the Sangathan found that people were not consulted and local government functionaries like the BDO and Gram Sevak made all the decisions. Plus there were clear cases of fraud in most projects undertaken. For example, at one site the documents said Rs. 50,000 had been paid as wages to labour but in fact only Rs. 33,000 had been spent on wages.

It was clear to the Sangathan that only a Social Audit can check such malpractices. But this means that government departments at all levels must share information with the people. This was precisely what local functionaries vehemently objected to and resisted. Nevertheless, the Sangathan managed to hold four Public Hearings

within five weeks, in December 1994 and January 1995.

By inviting journalists of national and state-level newspapers, to cover these events, the Sangathan succeeded in spreading the word beyond its own area. In addition it held public meetings in Jaipur and Udaipur to focus wider public attention on the socio-political implications of the Hearings. It also lobbied with senior state-level bureaucrats to demand a favourable government response to this process. Consequently, on April 5, 1995, the Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Mr. Bhairon Singh Shek-

*The rallying slogans for these hearings has been 'yeh kiska vikas—yeh kaisa vikas' (whose development—what kind of development is this?)*

hawat announced in the State Assembly that government functionaries would have to give photostat copies, of records pertaining to local works, to residents of that panchayat. The Sangathan sees this announcement as a landmark in the struggle for people to gain control and monitor the expenditure on Development in their respective areas.

In practice, however, local functionaries continue to refuse information—if not blatantly then through delay tactics. The public hearing at village Thana, described earlier, was the first to be held after the Chief Minister's announcement. In spite of intensive efforts by the Sangathan workers they were able to get the records for only two out of the five Panchayats being covered at the Thana hearing. But Ladoo Singh, a leading activist of the Sangathan and sarpanch of Thana village, is not disheartened. The fact that their effort has come so far means more than the obstacles still strewn in their path. 'Corruption will

only be removed when we all work together', says Ladoo Singh. This point was reinforced by another Sangathan activist, Chunni Singh, who rallied people at the close of the Thana hearing saying: 'We will have to work hard and get accounts for every paisa spent, just clapping here (at the Hearing) will not be enough.'

*'Corruption will only be removed when we all work together', says Ladoo Singh.*

This determination to question the functioning of the state machinery, the refusal to reconcile to the abuse of power, is the big 'leap' that these hearings represent. Even more significantly, 'this is a basic struggle for development as accountability', says Aruna Roy. All information pertaining to local government works must be placed before the Gram Sabha, she adds. This in turn requires the Gram Sabha to be fully alert and functional.

For the moment the aim of getting siphoned money back into the public kitty still seems elusive. But the Sangathan's activists are not disappointed. They are determined to wage a long and sustained struggle. This energy is partly derived from the hope that even if they cannot correct past malpractices their actions will be a deterrent to future offenders.

Above all, the very act of mobilising in this collective manner will boost people's confidence in incalculable ways. This counters their sense of powerlessness and moves towards fulfilling the promise of democracy.

Though the unique character of the Sangathan probably cannot be replicated, the basic principles of the Hearings can be applied in many places. An effort is already being made to hold such events in different parts of Rajasthan. □

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## Inter-Religious Dialogue: Prospects and Possibilities

(Continued from page 129)

into other religions is very common. Moreover, the concept of Incarnation is being studied in depth from the comparative perspective, and the resulting insights are progressively discrediting the notions of exclusiveness or privilege of any one religion over the others.

4. Finally, in the context of a technology becoming inimical to environment and to the sustainable levels of its development, the wisdom traditions of all religions

contain deep ecological truths. They all, without exception, present a picture of far-ranging interdependence. They conceive the cosmic system as an intricately arranged organism reflecting harmony, beauty and truth. These symbolize various layers of individual and collective consciousness existing in cooperation and harmony. Inter-religious dialogue helps us to rediscover and activate this 'depth' structure of timeless consciousness. □



# From Students

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## Why do I Love Swami Vivekananda

MOHIT RAINA

(CLASS-VII, 12 YEARS), CALCUTTA

Swami Vivekananda was the greatest spiritual son of India. He not only won the hearts of the Indians, but millions of people abroad also hold him in high esteem.

I like Swamiji because he was a great patriot and above all a noble human being. He always thought of the well-being of humanity irrespective of his or her status in society. He preached that 'each soul is potentially divine'. I have a great admiration for his principles. It was he who founded the religion—'Humanity'.

There are many qualities in Swamiji which one is naturally captivated by. For me the most important point which has made him different from other saints is his modern outlook towards society. In his attitude towards his followers he never patronized them. Indeed, he, even after so many years, has been taken as a modern thinker who understood the simple needs of the people.

His teachings are simple and can be easily abided by. That he was a great thinker and one of the greatest saints India has produced is unquestionable. What I like most about Swamiji is Swamiji himself. His honesty and simplicity have gone a long way in influencing my life. Swamiji is a person who can be easily associated with and therefore he has many followers throughout the world.

He was the first person to reveal India's vast knowledge and philosophy to the whole world. He proved undoubtedly that India is the most modern civilization of its kind.

He believed in universal brotherhood and so started his world-famous speech—the Chicago Address—with the words, 'Sisters and brothers of America'. Swamiji was the first to attempt to join the countries of the world in a bond of unity and friendship.

He told that we were the makers of our own faith and must strive to achieve the goals set before us. This is the feeling he inspired in all of us. His towering spiritual personality, gifted with articulate oratory, has

captivated my heart. Not only do I take him as a great saint but in him I find the divinity of a superlative human being.

To conclude I must say that I admire Swamiji most for promoting the cause of humanity, for promoting universal brotherhood, and, above all, for being a source of pride to our country. □

## Swami Vivekananda—The Patriot Monk

MISS RITUPARNA CHANDRA

B.A. 1ST YEAR, PRESIDENCY COLLEGE,  
CALCUTTA

Only the day before yesterday we had elections in our college. The youth frittered and wasted a lot of their energy in persuading others to cast votes for their candidates. They wasted not only their precious energy but also their invaluable time. If Swamiji had been present there at that time, he would certainly have asked the youth to work for the welfare of the people of the country, and not for petty politics.

The thought of his country and thought of his grieving countrymen stirred up most the mind of Swamiji. Though a monk, he did not bother about his own comfort, but was anxious for his fellowmen and his country. From birth till the last day of his life, Swami Vivekananda's first love was his motherland. The soil, the air, and every inch of the land was sacred to him. He awoke and slept in the thought of the motherland. When he returned from America to India, he had commented: Before coming here, I loved India, but now the very dust of India is precious to me, it is sacred to me. India is my holy place.

Swamiji's love for his motherland was never-ending. He not only devoted his life working for the welfare of his motherland, but also went ahead to stir up the minds of the energetic youth who too could do their part to uplift the nation. He was no doubt a patriot-monk who loved his country and tried to establish a society without caste and other barriers, where the best in all the sections of the people could flower.

Once when Swamiji's friend Miss MacLeod asked how she could help him, the only answer that came out spontaneously through his mouth was, 'Love India'. The patriot-monk that Swamiji was, he identified himself as the representative of a country which was the cradle of all the civilizations of the world. To him India was the mother of all the civilizations and thus the

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\* Talks delivered during the Vivekananda Youth Day celebration observed on 12 February, 1995 at Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta.



importance of Indian culture and civilization was unquestionable.

Those who are educated today have a tendency to go abroad and settle there. But is it good? Going abroad is fine, but staying there forever is nothing but betraying one's motherland, one's birthplace. Why, then, should people leave their country? Only for the sake of money? In fact, Swamiji's main message for the youth and the educated classes is that everyone should study and learn, and should also help fellow-countrymen to rise up.

He loved India not only because India was his motherland, but because India is the land of saints and monks. According to Swamiji India is the land of Truth. He said that if India dies, truth will die; religion will be extinguished, every single high thought will be erased off. India should not live merely for herself—India should exist for the sake of the whole world. India is the religious leader of the whole world. Swamiji was then the first spiritually illumined nationalist leader of India.

In the words of Sister Nivedita, 'India was the weak point of Swamiji.' In fact, Swamiji, while describing himself, once said, 'I am condensed India.' It is only through *love* for his motherland that Swami Vivekananda became one with India. That is why Rabindranath Tagore has said to Romain Rolland, 'If you want to know India, study Vivekananda.' □

### Why do I Love Swami Vivekananda

MISS SHUDDHASATTA GHOSH

(CLASS-VIII, 12 YEARS), CALCUTTA

When man loses the way to higher life, when he fails to find out the road to goodness and truth, or when due to some reason or other he is at a loss and cannot decide what to do, it is then and then alone that a great personality, full of self-confidence, descends on the earth and stands as a trail-blazer for mankind, showing it the true direction to achieve truth and goodness. Such a noble personality was Swami Vivekananda, whom I love with my whole heart, with devotion and faith.

I love him for the peerless qualities which his personality possessed. He was on the one hand brave, educated, selfless, a character of high tastes, a lover of humankind, a social reformer, a man of great self-control. On the other hand, he was the preacher of the message of Sri Ramakrishna, a fit disciple of his master, a competent teacher, and the conveyor of the message of the East to the West.

He understood that his countrymen were gradually losing confidence in their own religion, scripture, culture and social norms. The delusion of caste-distinction and superstition was going to engulf the whole nation.

He was determined to liberate his countrymen from that delusion.

He dedicated his life to transforming the spirituality of Vedanta into a life of selfless work. An Upanishad says, '*Sarvam khalvidam brahma*'—the same Brahman exists everywhere; Narayana dwells in *nara*, human being. Inspired by this message of the Upanishads, Swamiji declared—

*Bahurūpe sanimukhe tomār chāri kothā khujicho īśwar?  
Jīve prem kore jei jan, sei jan sevice īśwar.*

*These are his manifold forms before thee,  
Rejecting them, where seekest thou for God?  
Who loves all beings without distinction,  
He indeed is worshipping best his God.*

Swami Vivekananda also used to say, '*daridradevo bhava, mūrkhadevo bhava*'—let the poor and the ignorant be your God. Swamiji's God was the miserable humanity of this mortal world. His spirituality was not other-worldly, it was very much a practical spirituality. This is one of the characteristics of his personality that attracts me very much. He was the first Indian who preached the glory of India and Hinduism to the world at large.

What is the message of India? It is, '*Veda*'ham—I know'. Indeed, India knew such things which the world ought to hear, ought to know. It was the genius of Swami Vivekananda that carried this silent message of India to the world abroad—the message of Self-realization.

Swami Vivekananda realized that the eternal message of India was also that of unity; India's struggle was for harmony; the path laid down by India was the path to immortality. That path ends in peace, in unity. That is why Swamiji proclaimed her age-old but eternally young message of harmony to her children, 'O India, forget not that the illiterate, the low-caste, the poor, the ignorant, the shoe-black, the sweeper are your own blood, your own brethren. Hail, mighty one! Have courage and proclaim boldly—I am an Indian, the Indian is my brother! Say—the illiterate Indian, the poor Indian, the Caṇḍāla Indian is my brother.'

Swamiji wanted to build a new India by rejuvenating her religion of harmony, her ideals, and her aspirations. The responsibility of building up that great India, that '*Mahābhārata*' has come to our shoulders. May we complete that unfinished work by keeping him before us as our ideal.

In conclusion I offer my adoration to his blessed feet with a pure heart and say, 'O God, thou art my faith, thou art my will, thou art present everywhere.' □



# Feminism—Ideologies and Needs

DR. CHETANA MANDAVIA

*The traditional role of women in society has been a subject of discussion for over a century. The demand for equality with men in all matters and its acceptance to some extent has led to more problems for women than it solved.*

*Dr. Chetana Mandavia, an Associate Professor at Gujarat Agricultural University, Baroda, examines the question and concludes that profound strength and a greater awareness of one's worth can be generated by women only through spiritual awakening.*

Women are equal to men in all things that matter today—brain, courage, drive, humour, creativity, responsibility and perseverance. This was not so a century ago. Virtually in every culture women had been dominated, violated, restricted, or at least subtly controlled by men. Feminism began with a sense of moral outrage at such treatment of women. It is a revolutionary movement for ending several forms of harassment of women: violence, sexual exploitation, job discrimination, exclusion from public life, and unequal educational opportunities. The feminists feel that a woman's identity need not be limited to being a housewife, a good cook or a good mother. She should now have the opportunity to find an identity of her own.

## *Salient history of feminist movement*

In America and Europe, the movement has a long history of struggle. In England, in 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft stated her thesis in her book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*:

The first object of laudable ambition is to obtain a character as a human being, regardless of the distinction of sex. For man and woman truth, if I understand the meaning of the word, must be the same.<sup>1</sup>

A convention in 1848 at Seneca Falls, New York, demanded that women must have the right to vote. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, there were several National Women's Rights Conventions in America wherein this demand was put forth; several women organized arduously and carefully, spoke, and wrote petitions, and at last suffrage was granted to them in 1920.

In colonial countries, women's participation in the freedom movement became a practical manifestation of the ideologies of social reformers and nationalist leaders. For instance, equal civic and political rights were more or less thrust on Indian women as a consequence of achieving political freedom, without the prologue of a long drawn feminist movement. However, it is interesting to note that in India, male reformers of the nineteenth century pleaded for the improvement of women's status through education, restriction of child marriages, provision of property rights and the improvement in the condition of widows.

The case with the socialist states was similar to that of India. The revolutionary regimes in the Soviet Union as well as in

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*The Ideas of the Movement* (Cambridge Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 23.

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1. Gayle Graham Yates, *What Women Want*;—

China, for instance, perceived the emancipation of women as essentially a part of their struggle against oppression, exploitation and force.<sup>2</sup>

Feminism remained more or less dormant in Europe and U.S.A. after suffrage was granted to women in the second decade of the twentieth century. Even when Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*<sup>3</sup> was published in the U.S. in 1953, nothing happened. There was no movement, protest, or action. There was, however, resurgence of a new feminism with the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1962. The book exploded on the American scene and sparked the flames of considerable feminist reflection and activities throughout the world.

The core of her research was interviews with thousands of women, who reported a vague discontent, a distress that she calls 'the problem that has no name'. Having all the signs of feminine achievement—successful husbands, children, attractive homes—the women Friedan interviewed felt, nevertheless, lost and unfulfilled. Their problem, Friedan determined, was 'Occupation: housewife', which she calls 'the feminine mystique'. The answer that Betty Friedan argued lay in meaningful work outside the home, because women should have an equal opportunity to create for themselves a distinct identity and respect on the basis of vocation. Thus, new feminism began attacking the underlying role structure of the society as a whole. Their demand was for the restructuring of society, with re-definition of the males' and females' roles. Slowly, different women groups

under the designation 'Women's Liberation' or 'Female Liberation' had by the early 1970s become a sizable force in new feminism, demanding nothing short of full emancipation and total equality for women.

By equality feminists mean a socially androgynous conception of the roles of men and women, in which they are equal and similar in such spheres as intellectual, artistic, political and professional life.<sup>4</sup> This new feminism has increasingly influenced young women to stay single, and it has affected marital ties by questioning tradi-

*The feminists feel that a woman's identity need not be limited to being a housewife, a good cook or a good mother. She should now have the opportunity to find an identity of her own.*

tional assumptions about women's position as a wife.<sup>5</sup> It has to be noted that their labour bore fruit, and since the early seventies women have been granted equality in terms of job opportunity, pay, educational facilities, and so on.

After the stupendous success of *Feminine Mystique*, German Greer's book, *The Female Eunuch*, published in 1972 was widely held to be the most articulate and subversive manifesto of new feminism. In chapter after chapter she analysed and illustrated how women have been conditioned to view themselves through the eyes of men. According to her, women have been 'castrated' by patriarchal power—she has become a 'female eunuch'. Greer's treatment of the topic leads to a conclusion that a completely realized sexual identity is essential for a fully developed independence and autonomy as a person. The revolution that she called for is based on

2. *Women of the World, Illusion and Reality*, U. Phadnis, I. Malani, editors (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, Pvt. Ltd., 1978), pp. 3–4.

3. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 1953).

4. *Women of the World*, p. 240.

5. *What Women Want*, p. 14.



co-operation, on a wrecking of the stereotype and on the self-assertion of women as female persons.<sup>6</sup>

The most recent development in feminism is their demand for a share in religion. Mary Daly in her book, *Beyond God, the Father*, insists that there has been no feminine presence in the Christian deity. Daly believes that women must form the antichurch, and that in the bonding of a new sisterhood, they can be the force to liberate the church from distortions and idolatries.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Major feminist ideologies*

Based on the goals they want to achieve, sources of oppression and form of organizations and methods, feminists classify themselves under various categories like liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, radical feminism, social feminism, black feminism, ecology-focussed feminism, and Jewish, Christian and Islamic feminism, etc. For our understanding, however, looking to its history and the major points on their agenda, feminist ideologies can be classified into three groups, namely, liberal feminism, radical feminism, and the recently developed androgynous model.

*Liberal feminists* accept the common arrangement by which the man earns for the family and the wife superintends the domestic expenditure. The ideology of liberal feminism emphasized political and civil equality, better child care facilities, improvement in social customs, institutions, laws and attitudes.

*Radical or equality feminism's* beginning coincided with the beginning of the second wave of feminism revived by Betty Friedan's book. It replaced the struggle for

vote and legal reform with the demand for the destruction of patriarchy (male domination) and the establishment of a woman-oriented society. However, British focus was on class and the American focus was on gender.<sup>8</sup> Man being the enemy, and subordination seen as the biopsychological supremacy of male over female, the radical feminists' main plea is not only the removal of all sex distinctions but, for many, not allowing any place for men in their lives.<sup>9</sup>

For some of the recent feminists an *androgynous model* is the operating paradigm. Proponents of this kind of thinking lay the blame for the inequality of women on attitudes and social institutions, and assert that equality can and must be achieved through a process of reshaping social attitudes and institutions by women and men together.<sup>10</sup>

#### *Do women feel happy and fulfilled as a consequence of the movement?*

Feminist movement certainly has helped to clarify female problems and point the way to an alternate society. It has been a middle class movement attracting educated and relatively affluent individuals in every country. It has to be admitted that in a near-landslide victory, women have stormed male strongholds and, once inside, have become agents of change and role models for generations to come.

Having achieved economic and social independence, equality and power, it is high time to pause and question if they are happy and feeling fulfilled. The answer is perhaps in the negative. Their newly gained freedom is not complete. It is still fraught with

6. Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1971).

7. Quoted in *What Women Want*, p. 26.

8. *Sex and Class in Woman's History*, J.L. Newton, M.P. Ryan, & J.R. Walkiwitz, editors (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1990), pp. 4-5.

9. *Women of the World*, pp. 241-2.

10. *What Women Want*, p. 117.



obstacles. For all the pioneering that brave and ambitious women have done, the female majority remains unaffected. Combating conventional male attitudes is probably the toughest task. For most men, careerism means denigrating motherhood, pursuing selfish goals and an overall aggressiveness, which is condemned.

After having come a long way towards their constitutional and legal equality, for the average women equality in a true sense—at home and at the work place—remains a distant dream. They still feel that the dimension of the concept of equality in family life, social life, education, career, law

these feminine traits with a greater awareness, women will better realize their full potential and freedom.<sup>12</sup>

Even active women lib'ers like Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem and Germain Greer say that the feminist movement has now reached the second stage; that equality of sexes is no longer the solution it appeared to be when the movement was young and male protectionism was rejected as 'patronizing'. Betty Friedan, after 20 years of publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, wrote the *Second Stage*, in which she asked her sisters to go back to their traditional role—wifedom, motherhood and nurturing.

*But the moment she realizes that one's spiritual unfoldment is the real unfoldment of, or fulfilment in, life, she will be her true self—Śakti-svarūpa, the embodiment of divine power. Breaking all bondages, she will emerge with renewed fire into a new freedom of the Spirit. Surely, she will then be a power such as the world has not seen before.*

and politics needs to be spelt out. In their quest for equality, power and money, they have to sacrifice their marriages, motherhood and homelife; they have to put up with a greater physical, emotional and intellectual exploitation.

To them, a careful balancing of the roles and obligations and privileges, without the traditional pattern to fall back upon, sometimes seems like a utopian dream.<sup>11</sup> This situation forces them to question if their so-called unaware, uneducated mothers and grandmothers were not happier and more fulfilled than they are. Dr. Tony Grant analyses this in his book, *Being a Woman*. He believes that feminists have put greater stress on logic and ignored the natural gifts women possess—warmth, sympathy, affection and willingness to share and nurture. He feels that by putting more emphasis on

Many feel that instead of awakening the true spirit of womankind, the movement has led to erotic sexism. To some, it appears that individuality and self-centred interests are stressed *in the name* of freedom. Germain Greer, apparently disillusioned now, 21 years after her book (*The Female Eunuch*) was first published, says, 'The organized liberationists are a well-publicized minority; the same faces appear at different times and the movement is essentially leaderless.'<sup>13</sup>

*What is lacking and what is needed?*

Assessment of the goals feminists wanted to reach, the extent of their achievement, and their grievances show that despite its revolutionary character and success, the feminist movement has failed to show to women the way to happiness and

11. *Women of the World*, p. 240.

12. Quoted in *Navi Nari, Nava Vidhan* (Bombay: Navabharat Sahitya Mandir, 1992), p. 143.

13. *The Sunday Times of India*, 7 March 1993, p. 2.



fulfilment. A deeper analysis reveals that what is lacking is the *spiritual dimension* of the movement. Any social-political movement aimed at social and individual freedom for enjoying the world and its objects of pleasure, and which refuses to respect the essence of a person will be found to be inadequate and hence fail; because it does not face the real in its totality.

The Indian wisdom tells us that a person's true welfare lies basically in spirituality. All other freedoms—political, economic, social and intellectual, are essentially meant to lead a person to experience spiritual freedom and to know his/her spiritual equality and oneness with others. Despite all material possessions and social and economic freedom, women may feel a gnawing emptiness in their hearts. The craving for inner richness and fullness is a fundamental urge in a person. Any movement which does not take note of and provide for this will lead to frustration and failure.

Complete freedom, or liberation, is the freedom from bondage of attachment, selfishness, narrowness and all other limitations which prevent people from knowing their real nature, i.e. inherent divinity. 'It is this that is called liberation-in-life—when the last trace of egoism and selfishness is gone', says Vivekananda.<sup>14</sup> It is only through such spiritual awareness that men and women will be able to respond correctly to the problems brought about by gender differences. Knowledge of the spiritual self can take men and women far beyond gender. But without self-knowledge, self-fulfilment is nothing but ego-perpetuation.

Universality, unselfishness, love, friendship, kindness, charity and good-will

dominate a life having spiritual orientation. As we change and develop a spiritual outlook, everything falls into a proper perspective. Instead of chaos and confusion, peace and harmony will prevail. Attainment of individual harmony will be followed by harmony in the family, at the workplace and in society. Thus, the real sense of fulfilment, whether for man or for woman, comes from living for a higher ideal. This is accomplished by lifting one's mind from the physical and psychological self, and seeking fulfilment in goals conducive to the welfare of all. The duties performed thus, whether at home or at office, will bring joy, cheer, contentment and fulfilment.

Profound strength and a greater awareness of one's own worth, power and dignity is generated through spiritual awakening. Only the strength from such inward growth can enable women to assimilate and use to further advantage the freedom won so far.

Swami Vivekananda, who had absolute confidence in the powers of women, had prophesied, 'The past has been to strong physical men—the future to metaphysical women.'<sup>15</sup> So, a great future lies ahead for women—there is no doubt about it. Women's movement currently seems to be dishevelled, and women are non-plussed as to which way to turn for fulfilment. But the moment she realizes that one's spiritual unfoldment is the real unfoldment of, or fulfilment in, life, she will be her true self—*Śakti-svarūpa*, the embodiment of divine power. Breaking all bondages, she will emerge with renewed fire into a new freedom of the Spirit. Surely, she will then be a power such as the world has not seen before. □

14. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 6, p. 401.

15. *Letters of sister Nivedita*, Sankari Prasad Basu, editor (Calcutta: Navabharat Publs., 1982), vol. 1, p. 304.



## Vedanta Society 34 West 71st Street, New York, NY, 10023 Centenary Celebration 1994

As a part of its centenary celebrations, The Vedanta Society of New York presented a concert celebrating spiritual life and religious harmony on October 16, 1994. Nearly seventy-five musicians participated in the New York premiere of *A Mission to the World: An Oratorio Trilogy* for chorus and orchestra, vocal quartet and narrators held at Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. The music was composed by John Schlenck, music director of the Vedanta Society, and was performed by the New York Concert Singers and orchestra under the direction of Judith Clurman. The texts were written and compiled by Erik Johns with quotations from Swami Vivekananda. The main narrator was the well-known music commentator Martin Bookspan. The oratorio trilogy celebrates Vivekananda's coming to the United States, his renown at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, his twin messages of inter-religious harmony and the divine potential of humankind, and his founding of the Vedanta Society. The three segments are entitled, *Chicago—September 11, 1893*, *The Bell that Told* and *Epistles—1893-1894*. An enthusiastic audience of several hundred attended the performance.

For your further information, we enclose the biographical data of the artists:

Composer **John Schlenck** was born in Indianapolis in 1936 and graduated from the Eastman School of Music in 1957. He served for many years on the musical staff of the Martha Graham and Alvin Ailey Dance Schools. As music director of the Vedanta Society of New York since 1961, he has composed many songs and a number of larger works with religious texts. His cantata *The Illumined Self*, with classical Vedantic texts, was performed in San Francisco in 1986, as part of the Vedanta Society of Northern California's sesquicentennial celebration of the birth of Sri Ramakrishna. Recently performed works include *Seek the Eternal: An Interfaith Cantata Celebrating the Spiritual Life*, performed at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in 1993, and the cantata, *The Universal Gospel*, performed at the Conference of Global Religions at Queens College, New

York in 1994. Works in progress include two symphonies and an allegorical oratorio on the *Exodus*.

Founded by its music director and conductor Judith Clurman, **The New York Concert Singers**, made its debut at Merkin Concert Hall, in March, 1988 and, since that time, performs regularly in New York City. The high value placed on the creation and performance of contemporary music, particularly American music, is reflected in the New York Concert Singers' programming. In 1992, the The New York Concert Singers was awarded first place in the first ASCAP Chorus America Award for adventuresome programming of contemporary music. The New York Concert Singers has premiered music by numerous composers, including Leonard Bernstein, William Bolcom, David Diamond, Libby Larsen, Peter Mennin, Stephen Paulus, Arvo Paert, Ned Rorem, Augusta Read Thomas, and Ellen Taaffe Zwilch. The ensemble has served as the vocal ensemble in residence for Lincoln Center's Performing Arts Programs for Schools. Plans for the 1994-95 concert season include recordings, and performances throughout New York City.

Conductor **Judith Clurman** is the founder, music director, and conductor of The New York Concert Singers. She has also been particularly active at Lincoln Center, where she directs groups for the Great Performers series, the Mostly Mozart Festival, the Performing Arts Programs for Schools, and the community programming department. She is the member of The Juilliard School faculty.

Poet and artist **Erik Johns** is best known for his libretto for Aaron Copland's opera, *The Tender Land*, composed in 1953. Subsequently he collaborated with composers Ernst Toch and Jack Gottlieb on *Debts and Doubts* and *A Symphony of Operas*, respectively. In 1955, Johns joined the Vedanta Society of New York, where he met John Schlenck and began a collaboration that has produced a number of songs and cantatas on religious themes.

Narrator **Martin Bookspan** has been the 'Voice of the New York Philharmonic' in its radio and television



broadcasts, as well as commentator for all of the Live from Lincoln Center and Live from Studio 8H broadcasts. Mr. Bookspan has also been associated with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Spoleto Festival, U.S.A., BAM, WABC-TV, and other prominent musical organizations. Mr. Bookspan received the National Arts Club Medal of Honor in March 1984 and, in 1986, was awarded a Lifetime of Service Citation by the Concert

Artist Guild in New York. In 1991 he was awarded an honorary doctorate in music by the Mannes College of Music.

*John Schlenck,  
Vedanta Society*

**The Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre of New York  
Centennial celebration of Swami Vivekananda  
at Thousand Island Park  
21-23 July, 1995**



*Swamiji at Thousand Island Park*

### Introduction

In the summer of 1895 Swami Vivekananda spent seven weeks at Thousand Island Park, a town located on Wellesley Island (in the St. Lawrence River), New York. The Cottage in which the Swami lived was acquired in 1947 by the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre of New York and has since then been maintained as the VIVEKANANDA COTTAGE, a shrine and a summer retreat of the Centre. The daily talks given at the Cottage by Swami Vivekananda in 1895 were later published as the *Inspired Talks*, and it was at this Cottage that he wrote his famous poem, 'Song of the Sannyasin'. In a letter, Swami Vivekananda wrote, 'I was at my best in Thousand Island Park.'

From July 21 to 23, 1995, a celebration commemorating the Centenary of Swami Vivekananda's stay at Thousand Island Park was jointly held by the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre of New York and the



*Miss Dutcher's Cottage. The portion at left  
was added to accommodate Swamiji*

Thousand Island Park Corporation, Tabernacle Committee, Landmark Society and other organizations of the Park. The event was historic in that it was the first time that the entire community of Thousand Island Park joined with the Centre in a programme of this kind. In the summer of 1994, when the coming Centenary was brought to the attention of the Park, virtually all the organizations of the Park expressed their keen desire to join our Centre in celebrating the occasion, and declared that the weekend of July 21-23, 1995 would be designated by the Park authorities as 'Vivekananda Weekend'. The following is a report of the Centenary celebration which took place at the Park during those dates.

### Preparing for the Centenary

Before the celebration the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre of New York sent a colourful





Barry Zelikovsky (Swami Vidananda), a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, talks with Thousand Island Park Children at the Park Library.  
(Courtesy: *Thousand Island Sun*, Alexander Bay, NY, 19 July 1995)



Town Meeting at the Thousand Island Park Tabernacle on Friday, 21 July 1995 at 7:30 PM showing Swami Adiswarananda addressing the audience



invitation brochure to its members and friends as well as to every resident of Thousand Islands Park. Also sent to all residents of the Park was a publication by the Park's Landmark Society entitled 'Swami Vivekananda at Thousand Island Park 1895-1995', written especially for the occasion by Susan Turri, a resident of the Park. The Thousand Island Park Corporation and the many organizations of the Park also announced the coming celebration through their individual newsletters. On July 5th the THOUSAND ISLANDS SUN, the major newspaper of the Thousand Islands region, wrote about the forthcoming celebration. Again, the same newspaper devoted three full pages to the Centenary in its issue of July 19th.

A distinguished reporter from the *Watertown Daily Times*, one of the most important newspapers of upstate New York, visited the Vivekananda Cottage and on Sunday, July 16th, that newspaper published on the front page of one of its sections, an outstanding two-page article with colour photographs of Swami Vivekananda and the Vivekananda Cottage. In this article entitled 'The Swami of the St. Lawrence', the reporter, John Golden, quoted extensively from Swami Vivekananda's *Inspired Talks*, and wrote about the Swami: 'He was a gentle pioneer crossing the religious border between East and West. He rallied his English-speaking audiences to a spiritual democracy. Swami Vivekananda was America's first welcomed guru.'

For the celebration the Landmark Society of the Park placed a large colour photograph of Swami Vivekananda in the window of its office, and the Park Museum displayed a number of photographs of Swami Vivekananda with his teachings, and referred to the swami as 'the Saint Peter of India'. Also, the Park Library displayed a poster of Swami Vivekananda along with a large collection of books on his life and teachings. A week before the celebration, on invitation, Swami Adiswarananda gave two very well-attended public talks in the Library on 'Swami Vivekananda and the Spiritual Heritage of Thousand Island Park'.

### The Centenary Programmes

There were several special programmes and concerts attended by hundreds of members of the Park community and devotees and admirers of Swami Vivekananda who came from many cities of America, Canada, England and other countries for the Centenary celebration. Participating in the programmes were Swami Lokeswarananda (Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta), Swami Sarvagatananda (Spiritual Leader of the Vedanta Societies of Boston and Providence), Swami Swahananda (Spiritual

Leader of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood), Swami Pramathananda (Spiritual Leader of the Vedanta Society of Toronto, Canada), Swami Prabuddhananda (Spiritual Leader of the Vedanta Society of Northern California, San Francisco) and Swami Dayatmananda (Spiritual Leader of the Vedanta Centre, Bourne End, England). Also participating were religious leaders of different faiths, scholars, Thousand Island Park community leaders and well-known musical artists.

### Pilgrimage to the Vivekananda Rock

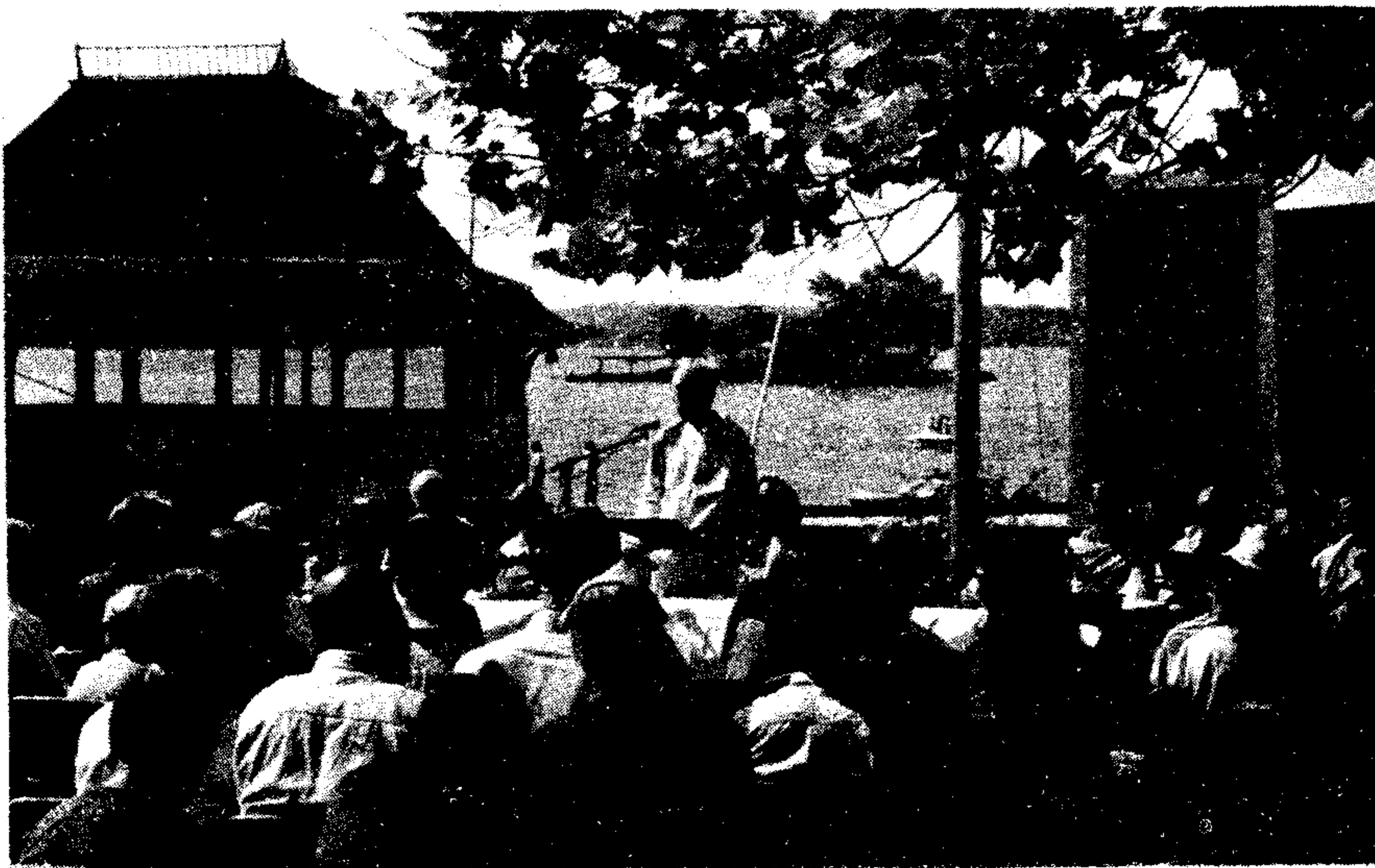
The celebration began on Friday, July 21st with a morning pilgrimage by the devotees to the 'Vivekananda Rock', where Swami Vivekananda sat in meditation on the day of his departure from the Thousand Islands. Vedic chanting by the Centre's choir was followed by a reading from the Introduction to the *Inspired Talks* about Swami Vivekananda's visit to that spot. All present then meditated for some time. The pilgrimage was concluded with a visit to the Vivekananda Cottage shrine—the room where the Swami lived during his stay.

### Town Meeting

The public celebration opened on Friday, July 21st at 7:30 PM in the spacious Thousand Island Park Tabernacle with a Town Meeting which had as its theme, 'Swami Vivekananda and the Heritage and Tradition of Thousand Island Park'. More than 500 persons filled the brilliantly lighted Park Tabernacle to its capacity and the large stage was beautifully decorated with flowers, American and Canadian national flags (Thousand Island Park is only a few miles from the Canadian border), large banners declaring, 'The Centenary of Swami Vivekananda in America—A Tribute to the Spiritual Unity of Humankind and the Harmony of Religions', and a seven-foot tall photograph of Swami Vivekananda. Presiding at the programme was SWAMI ADISWARANANDA, Spiritual Leader of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre of New York and Vivekananda Cottage at Thousand Island Park.

Participating in the event were the following visiting Swamis, guests and representatives of the Thousand Island Park organizations: SWAMI LOKESWARANANDA, SWAMI SARVAGATANANDA, SWAMI SWAHANANDA, SWAMI PRAMATHANANDA, SWAMI PRABUDDHANANDA AND SWAMI DAYATMANANDA; PRAVRAJIKA BRAHMAPRANA (Sarada Convent, Santa Barbara); REV. ROBERT B. DUNBAR (Episcopal Church of Our Saviour, Rock Hill, South Carolina and Snowmass Ecumenical Conference





Centennial Blessing of the Thousand Islands  
at the Thousand Island Park Main Dock Pavilion on Saturday, 22 July 1995 at 10:00 AM  
showing the visiting Swamis and religious leaders and  
Swami Adiswarananda addressing the audience



Centennial Blessing of the Thousand Islands  
at the Thousand Island Park Main Dock Pavilion on Saturday, 22 July 1995 at 10:00 AM  
showing Swami Adiswarananda, the visiting Swamis and the religious leaders  
at the riverside about to place flowers into the river  
as the parade of 32 boats prepares to offer their salutation  
(The photograph of Swami Vivekananda was placed at the front of the leading boat)



for Inter-religious Dialogue); DR. AMRITA MONICA SALM (Professor of Education, Secretary, Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood); REV. JACK ANDERSEN (President, Thousand Island Park Corporation); MARILYN THOMAS (Chairperson, Thousand Island Park Tabernacle Committee); TILLIE YOUNGS (Special Projects Coordinator, Thousand Islands International Council); EILEEN PRICE (Park Landmark Society); WINDSOR M. PRICE (Park Museum); MAMIE HEATH (Park Library); GEORGE ALBRIGHT (Wellesley Island Volunteer Fire Department and Ambulance Corps); ELLEN DETLEFSEN REYNOLDS (Friends of Rock Ridges Nature Trail); JIM DICKSON (Park Yacht Club). Musical offerings were given by the Choir of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre of New York, directed by EDWIN SANTAYANA; ELIZABETH HARINGTON, Organist of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre of New York; WINDSOR PRICE, JR., Singer-songwriter; JOSEPH DWYER, Tenor; and the Thousand Island Park Tabernacle Choir directed by DR. LELAND H. ROBERTS.

The evening began with a musical prelude, filling the Tabernacle hall with a grand pipe organ sound (a special sound system was installed for the occasion), while the participants took their places on the stage. The Centre's Choir then presented an uplifting musical rendition of Swami Vivekananda's poem, 'The Living God'. Swami Adiswarananda then welcomed the participants and everyone to the programme, read the messages which he received for the occasion from the President, Vice Presidents and General Secretary of the Order, and presented his Welcome and Introductory Remarks. Welcome and Introductory Remarks were then offered by the President of the Park and the chairperson of the Tabernacle Committee, after which followed the tributes of the visiting Swamis, guests and participants.

During the programme there were several musical offerings: the singer song-writer Windsor Price, Jr. performed several songs associated with the St. Lawrence River, while the tenor, Joseph Dwyer presented Swami Vivekananda's poem, 'Song of the Sannyasin' put to music. The programme concluded with a hymn by the Tabernacle Choir, followed by thanks and concluding remarks by Swami Adiswarananda. As the programme ended, the pipe organ sounds once again filled the air. A reception was then held at the Vivekananda Cottage to which members of all Park organizations had been especially invited. More than 300 persons attended the reception at the Cottage which was dramatically illuminated for the occasion with a number of large blue-white spotlights, creating

an atmosphere of daylight in the midst of darkness. All felt inspired by being reminded of the spiritual heritage and tradition of Thousand Island Park and looked forward to the coming events of the 'Vivekananda Weekend.'

### **Centennial Blessing of the Thousand Islands**

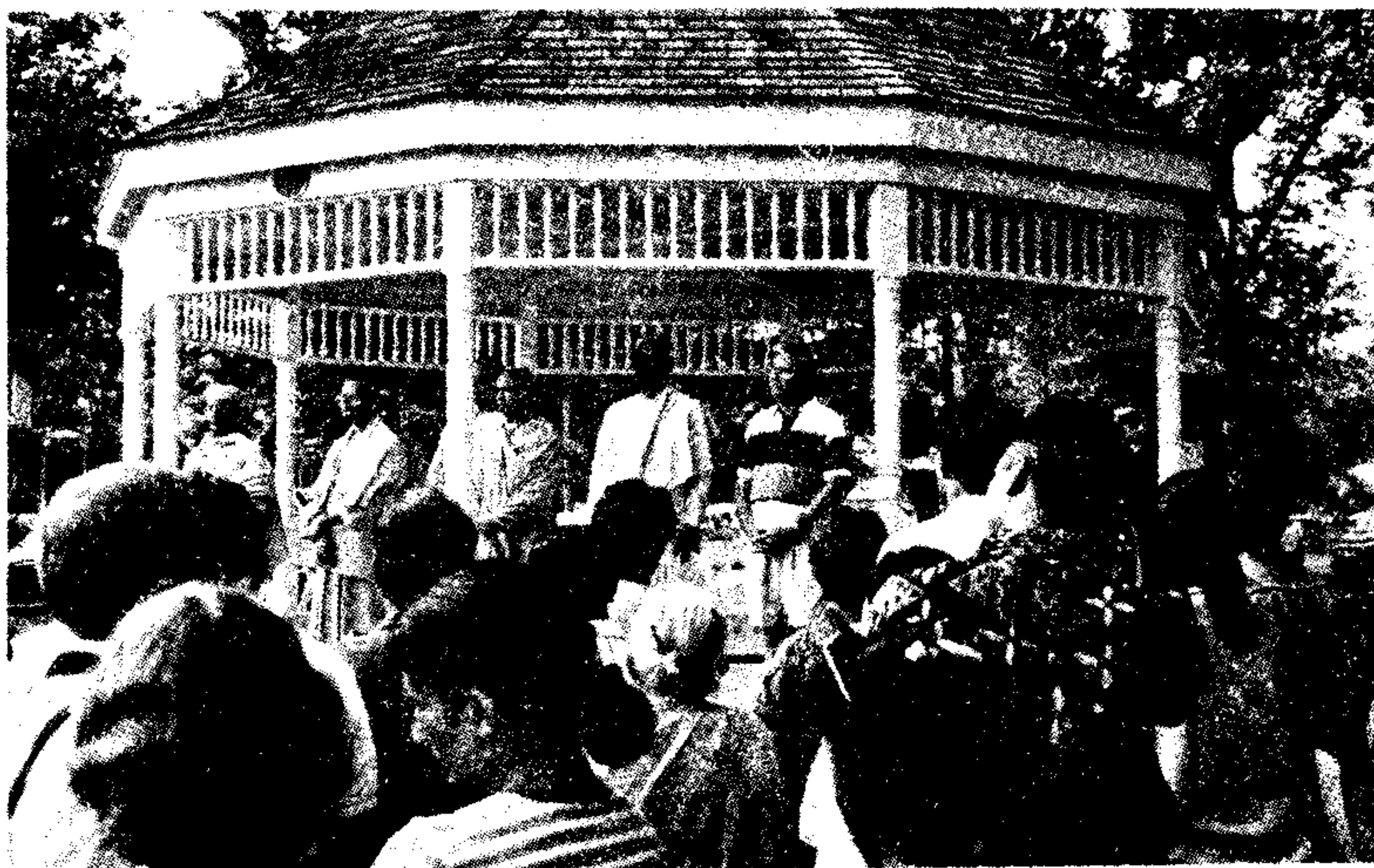
On the second day of the celebration, Saturday, July 22, at 10:00 AM with the morning sun shining brightly, more than 400 persons assembled for the 'Centennial Blessing of the Thousand Islands' on the bank of the St. Lawrence River at the Main Dock of the Park—the very same dock where Swami Vivekananda arrived on June 18, 1895, and where, after a momentous seven-week stay he departed with the words, 'I bless these Thousand Islands'. Seated before the large photograph of Swami Vivekananda and the Centennial banners, with the beautiful River as a backdrop were the participants: SWAMI ADISWARANANDA and the visiting Swamis; LAURIEMARR, Executive Director of Save the River (an environmental organization); REV. JACK ANDERSON, President of the Thousand Island Park Corporation and REV. JAMES D. BROWN, Executive director of the General Assembly Council of the Presbyterian Church of America, a summer resident of the Park who came especially from Louisville, Kentucky to join in the Centenary events. The one-hour ceremony began with Vedic chanting by the Centre's choir, followed by a reading from the Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda describing the Swami's historic blessing of the Islands.

The participating Swamis and ministers offered their messages and prayers for the occasion and then with Vedic chanting by the Choir, each of the participants picked up a bouquet of flowers and proceeded to the Main Dock at the River's edge, while the assembled crowd gathered on the riverbank. A parade of thirty-two boats of the Thousand Island Park Yacht Club could then be seen forming into a procession which brought them to within just several feet of the religious leaders standing on the Dock. It was truly a glorious sight to behold these boats, slowly approaching on the gleaming blue water of the River, each boat decorated with flags and helium-filled balloons of all colours, and with a large picture of Swami Vivekananda at the front of the leading boat. Then, as the boats gradually reached the Dock, each of the Swamis and religious leaders placed his flower bouquet into the River. As each bouquet was offered, the horns on all of the boats resounded with the nautical 'salutation of honour'. When the final bouquet was offered, all horns





United States Army 10th Mountain Division Band Concert  
on the Thousand Island Park Main Green on Saturday, 22 July 1995 at 12:30 PM  
showing a part of the audience



Thousand Island Park Landmark Society Illumination Night Ceremony  
on the Thousand Island Park Main Green  
on Saturday, 22 July 1995 at 7:00 PM showing the visiting swamis,  
Rev. Jack Andersen (President of the Thousand Island Park Corporation)  
and Swami Adiswarananda addressing the audience



again sounded at once and the hundreds of balloons on the boats were released, quickly rising high into the blue sky above in an inspiring and colourful display, all while Vedic chanting continued to fill the air.

All then returned to their seats where the ceremony was concluded with a performance on guitar by SCOTT CAMPBELL of the 'Ode to Joy' from the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven. The Centre's volunteers then served specially prepared boxed lunches to the entire gathering. According to the many comments received later, this grand ceremony at the river touched the hearts of all the members of the Thousand Island Park community. Many were deeply moved by the solemnity of the event, the sounds of chanting, the inspiring messages of blessings, and the beauty of the procession of boats, all serving to remind them of the spiritual heritage of the Park which they love so much.

### **U.S. Army 10th Mountain Division Band Concert and Thousand Island Park Illumination Night**

Following the luncheon, from 12:30 PM to 2:00 PM, all moved to the nearby main green of the Park where the forty-five musicians of the United States Army 10th Mountain Division Band from Fort Drum, New York performed a lively and colourful concert.

Later, at 6:45 PM, all gathered once again on the main green of the Park for the Illumination Night ceremony organized by the Park's Landmark Society in honour of Swami Vivekananda. This event, at which candles are lighted along the streets and in front of the cottages, is held every two years as a way of remembering the history and tradition of the Park. Swami Adiswarananda gave a prayer and message for the occasion, which was followed by a passing of the candle to each of the visiting Swamis and then from the oldest to the youngest member of the Park community. All then went in procession to the Tabernacle for the final event of the day, the Swami Vivekananda Centennial Concert by UNU MONDO (One World).

### **Swami Vivekananda Centennial Concert**

For this much-anticipated Concert by the well-known musical group UNU MONDO (One World), over 650 persons filled the Tabernacle beyond its capacity. In anticipation of the large audience, extra seating was provided in an area just outside the hall, within view of the stage. This wonderful contemporary jazz and world music group perform on more than 50 traditional instruments from around the world, blended with high technology. They have performed over 1200 concerts throughout the United States and abroad, and

dedicate their music to the belief that all people are members of one human family. Swami Adiswarananda introduced the four gifted musical artists of UNU MONDO who are admirers of Swami Vivekananda and travelled hundreds of miles from the state of New Hampshire to take part in this Centenary programme at Thousand Island Park.

The two-hour concert then began and each of the musical selections was received by the audience with sustained applause and cheers. At the conclusion of the Concert the audience responded with a long standing ovation, causing the artists to perform yet again. Swami Adiswarananda then thanked the artists for their beautiful musical offering in honour of Swami Vivekananda and reminded everyone that the artists of UNU MONDO would also take part in the Interfaith Service the following morning.

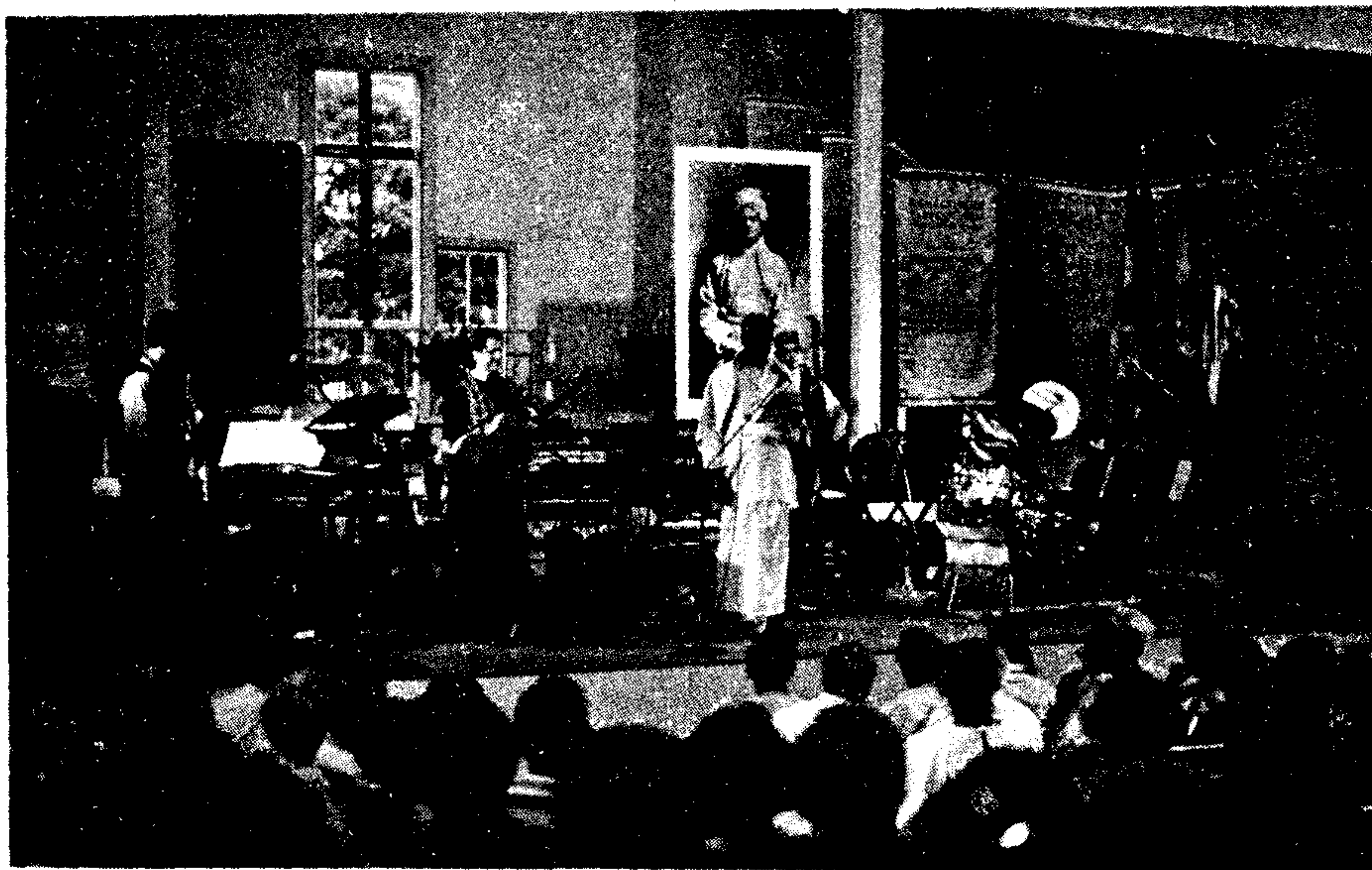
### **Interfaith Service**

The final event of the Centennial Celebration was the Interfaith Service held in the Park's Tabernacle at 10:00 AM on Sunday, July 23rd, with the theme 'A Tribute to the Spiritual Unity of Humankind and the Harmony of Religions'. Once again the Tabernacle was filled beyond its capacity with over 550 in attendance. Swami Vivekananda's large photograph, the Centennial banners, the American and Canadian flags and flowers again presented a festive atmosphere.

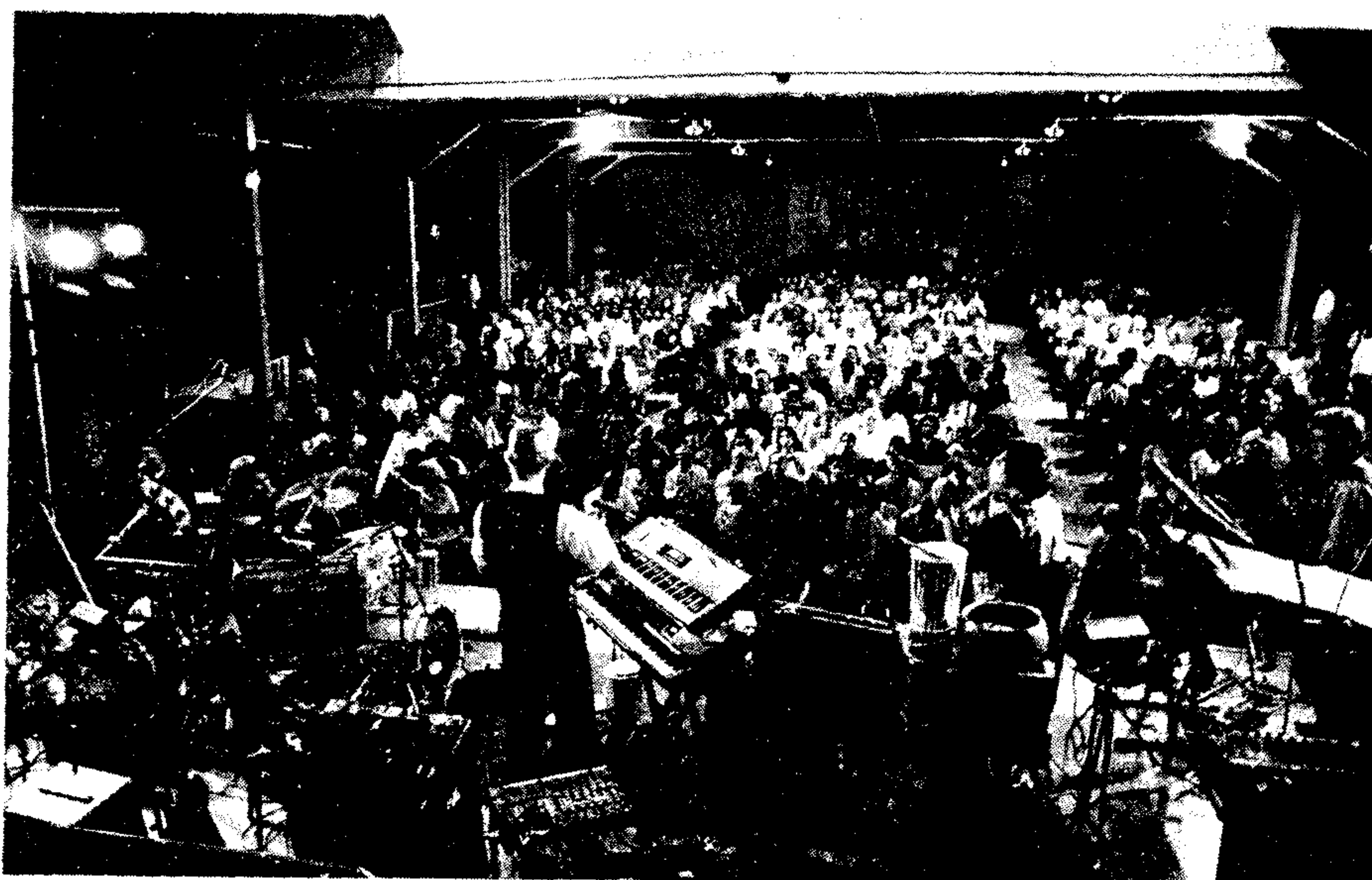
Once again SWAMI ADISWARANANDA presided. Participating in the Service were the following visiting Swamis, guest and religious leaders: SWAMI LOKESWARANANDA, SWAMI SARVAGATANANDA, SWAMI SWAHANANDA, SWAMI PRAMATHANANDA, SWAMI PRABUDDHANANDA and SWAMI DAYATMANANDA; REV. JAMES D. BROWN, REV. DANIEL L. CHAPIN (Pastor of St. Mary's Catholic Church, Clayton, New York and St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church, LaFargeville, New York); PRAVRAJKA BRAHMAPRANA; REV. ROBERT B. DUNBAR and DR. AMRITA MONICA SALM.

The music of UNU MONDO filled the hall, signalling the beginning of the Service, while the participants entered the Tabernacle in a procession and took their seats on the platform. Vedic chanting was then performed by the Choir of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre of New York, followed by the Thousand Island Park Tabernacle Choir singing of the hymn entitled 'One World'. Thereafter, Swami Adiswarananda gave the Opening Prayer and made his Introductory Remarks, and the participants presented their respective tributes to Swami Vivekananda and his message.





Centennial Concert at the Thousand Island Park Tabernacle  
on Saturday, 22 July 1995 at 8:00 PM  
showing Swami Adiswarananda introducing the artists of  
the Musical Group UNU MONDO ('One World') to the audience



Centennial Concert at the Thousand Island Park Tabernacle  
on Saturday, 22 July 1995 at 8:00 PM showing the artists of  
the Musical Group UNU MONDO ('One World')  
performing before the capacity audience



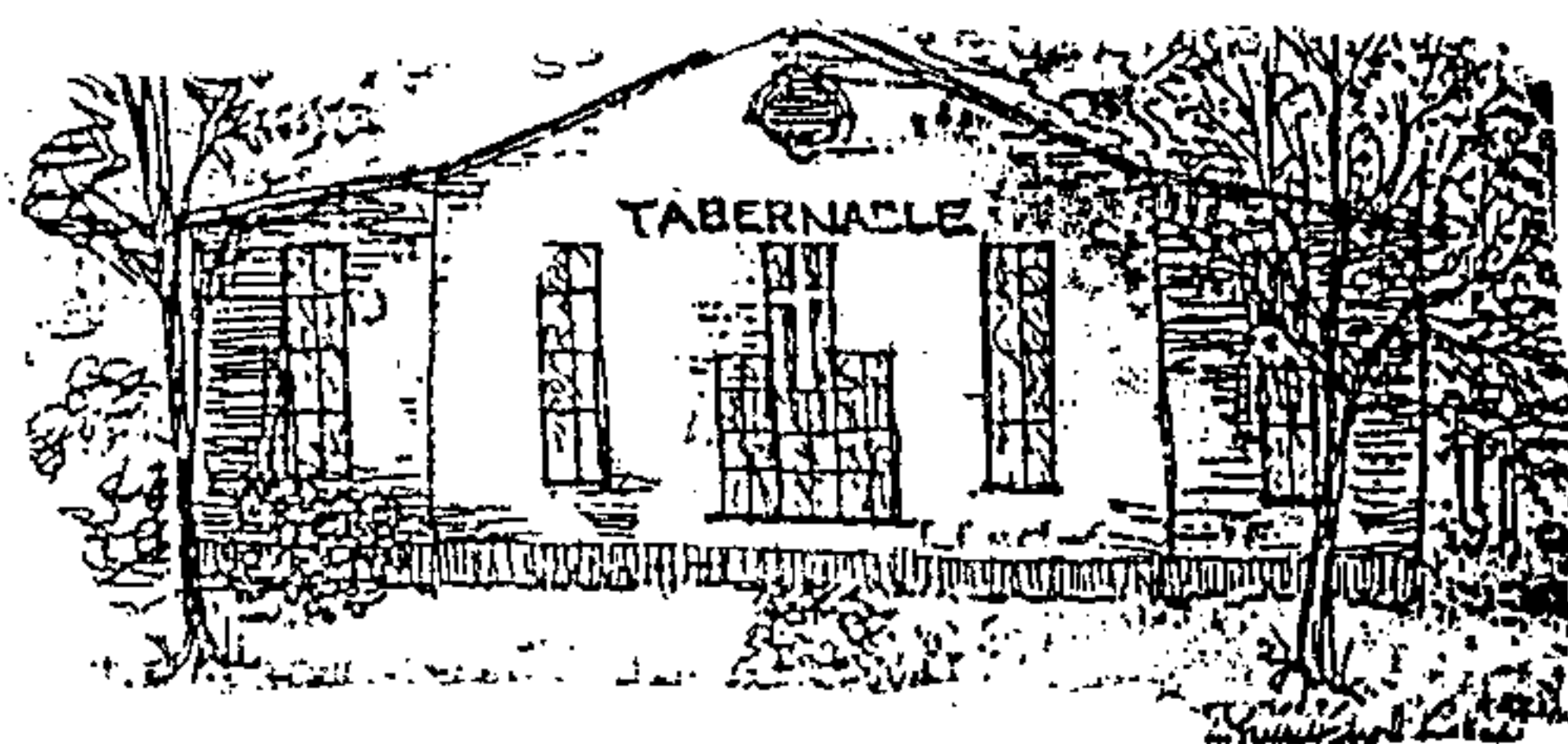
As part of the Service the Centre's Choir performed another soulful musical rendering of a poem by Swami Vivekananda: 'To the Infinite', and the artists of UNU MONDO offered a special selection. Swami Adiswarananda then thanked all the participants, musical artists, and also those who attended the Centennial events, for helping to make the celebration such a grand success, and invoked the blessings of Swami Vivekananda for the well-being of all. As the service concluded the organ again filled the Tabernacle hall. The Service was followed by a reception at the Tabernacle hosted by the Tabernacle Committee and an 'Open House' at the Vivekananda Cottage during which more than 300 persons, mostly residents of the Park, visited the Cottage.

### Conclusion

The events of the Centennial celebration left a deep impression on the minds of all. Many remarked that Thousand Island Park had never before experienced spiritual events of such a magnitude. They said that the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre had brought the people of the Park together in a way which had not happened any time before and repeatedly thanked Swami Adiswarananda for this wonderful gift.

On Sunday, July 23rd, the CBS (Columbia Broadcasting System) Network Television's Eleven O'clock Evening News devoted a segment of its programme to the celebration, showing photographs of Swami Vivekananda and the gathering at the morning's Interfaith Service. In the report the newscaster stated, 'More than 500 people from around the world gathered at the Tabernacle on Wellesley Island this week to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the visit to Thousand Island Park of the Swami Vivekananda. Swami Vivekananda was India's first spiritual ambassador from India to the West.'

On July 26th, *The Thousand Islands Sun*, the major newspaper of the Thousand Islands region, published another article in which it said, 'Residents of Thousand Island Park realized this weekend their community is the sight of a religious shrine....Hundreds participated in a series of concerts and ceremonies marking the hundredth anniversary of the arrival of Swami Vivekananda on June 18, 1895....Swami Vivekananda had come to North America to spread the teachings of his teacher Sri Ramakrishna, a Hindu prophet who preached that religion should not divide people, but unite them.' □



### Tabernacle Committee Information Sheet

1995 no. 6

July 27, 1995

#### *Vivekananda Weekend*

A note from Marilyn Thomas, Chair, Tabernacle Committee: Many words come to mind when I think about Vivekananda Weekend: history, serenity, pride, harmony, holy, music, River, fun, and many more. From the opening programme on Friday evening to the last visitor at Vivekananda Cottage Sunday evening, we experienced a very special weekend.

Two years ago Swami Adiswarananda, Barry Zelikovsky (himself now a Swami—Vidananda) and I talked about the possibility of celebrating the hundredth anniversary of Vivekananda's visit to TI Park. Last summer we met with many of the Park service organizations and they enthusiastically supported the idea of a weekend celebration. The Tabernacle Committee wants to thank these wonderful people for their year of planning, hard work and commitment. A special thank you to the TIP Corporation (including the Board of Directors, Denny Murdock, and the office staff of Chris Chaltain and Barbara Loomis): our many requests were always answered and your cooperation was greatly appreciated. How can you adequately thank the maintenance staff who spent hours and hours working to make everything just perfect: Greg and crew, you were outstanding, particularly after a week of storm cleanup! And as always, you—our Park Family—responded to the past weekend with enthusiasm, support and graciousness. You made the guests of Swami Adiswarananda feel very special, and they mentioned to me several times how wonderful you were. Finally, we want to thank Swami Adiswarananda for his 'gift' to Thousand Island Park. We were honoured to have been a part of such a memorable and historic occasion.

We who love this River and Park were reminded again how blessed we are. Swami Vivekananda said it well when he said in 1895, 'I am at my best when I am in the Thousand Islands.' □



### **An extract of a letter from Pravrajika Brahma-prana written to a Swami in India**

The Thousand Island Park programme was a gift to the island—and a gift it indeed was. The room from Swamiji's room in the Vivekananda Cottage seemed to encircle and permeate the island. About 550–700 people (180 were devotees) attended the programmes—an over-capacity crowd in the Tabernacle. In fact a large tent had to be erected next to the Tabernacle to accommodate the overflow crowd. (The tent almost caved in as the devotee crowd surged to pranam the swamis!)

A large crowd sat in silence on the morning of the first day to inaugurate the Centenary celebrations with a period of meditation on the rock where Swamiji had sat in Nirvikalpa Samadhi. It was a beautiful, unostentatious ceremony. Very moving. That night was the large gathering in the Tabernacle to commemorate the spiritual heritage of Thousand Island Park. At the last minute Swami Lokeshwaranandaji was able to attend, and rode up just minutes before our procession into the Tabernacle. That night was an open house at the Cottage for the special guests of the TIP.

On the second day was the yacht ceremony. Our swamis and the two ministers each gave beautiful 3–5 minute talks on the significance of the river in religion. Then with bouquets in hand, they walked down to the dock where Vivekananda had landed 100 years ago (the islanders had posted a banner reading WELCOME VIVEKANANDA), as strong masculine voices blazoned the air with thrilling notes of Vedic chanting—notes that from onshore reached out across the onlooking crowd and across the vast expanse of the St. Lawrence River. The chanting cast a spell on the crowd and infused a solemnity and power to the occasion that was electrifying. As the 25–30 some yachts came by the

dock, a horn was sounded and one of the swamis or ministers tossed his bouquet into the river. After 15–20 minutes, all bouquets were in the water.

This simple ceremony brought tears to my eyes and to the eyes of many other people. As Swami Prabuddhanandaji had expressed in his short talk: 'It is not we who bless the river; it is the river that blesses us.' Islanders came up to me later—on the streets of the Park to say that Swami Adiswarananda had indeed given something to this island. It could never be the same.

The three-day celebration ended with the inter-religious talks at the Tabernacle, followed by another Open House, extended to the islanders.

There were so many memories of that three-day event that were unforgettable: waking up in a loft overlooking the St. Lawrence and having a vivid flashback of meditating on the Ganges at dawn at Belur Math and realizing for the first time in my life that, of all things, a river could have its own spiritual atmosphere; the illumination of the Vivekananda Cottage on the first night (and islanders coming up to me later to whisper in awe how it was the first time they had actually been *inside* the Cottage); the Army band playing in the hot sun strains from 'The Lion King', a Walt Disney Aesop-type fable; a standing ovation given to UNU MONDO for their performance on the many different instruments of the world; the electrical storm that let loose from the heavens during the Open House—the last event of the last days' programme (as if the Divine Mother were telling us, 'No, it was not *your* prayers that stalled the rains from marring the Celebrations—it was My Sweet Will! Now take a good dose of My wet blessings!'); and the sheer joy of being with so many swamis and participating in a grand event that received television, newspaper, and radio coverage in Canada and America....

Each one of us will have to believe that every one else in the world has done his work, and the only work remaining to be done to make the world perfect has to be done by himself. This is the responsibility we have to take upon ourselves.

—Swami Vivekananda



# Reviews and Notices

**MEDITATION ON SWAMI VIVEKANANDA:** By Swami Tathagatananda; publ. the Vedanta Society of New York, 34 West 71st Street, New York, N.Y. 10023; 1994; distributed in India by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 600 004; pp: 302; Rs. 50/-.

Swami Tathagatananda, the spiritual leader of the Vedanta Society of New York, needs no introduction to readers of *Prabuddha Bharata*. His earlier books *Glimpses of Great Lives* (1989) and *Meditation on Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda* (1993) have already evidenced his deep insight, incisive style and, above all, far-ranging familiarity with the spiritual predicament of modern times. The present volume, released to mark the centenary of the Vedanta Society, New York, founded by Swami Vivekananda himself in 1984, is, it seems to me, a culmination of Swami Tathagatananda's long, sustained meditation on the significance of the unique phenomenon which the world is slowly but surely recognizing as Swami Vivekananda.

The singular in the word 'Meditation' alerts the reader to the fact that the book reflects, in itself, the Vedantic motif of unity in diversity. Different aspects of Swamiji's life and historic mission are portrayed but with the *unifying* focus always remaining his Vedantic vision of the oneness of existence, the divinity of the Self and the plurality of faiths striving for a harmony indispensable for the continuing validity of religion itself. Thus, in Swamiji's 'integral vision of truth there was no cleavage between science and religion, the East and the West, secular and spiritual, work and worship.' In short, as Swami Tathagatananda puts it, in memorable words, Swamiji's 'passion was man, the whole man' and, as such, he gave

'a blueprint for a new culture based on spiritual life presented on a massive scale.'

The essays in the volume are meditative explorations of the various aspects of this 'blue-print'. Consisting of twenty five essays, the book is, as it were, a remarkably comprehensive compendium of the different facets of Swamiji's philosophy. The first three essays—on 'The Individual and the Supreme', 'The Concept of God in Hindu Religion' and 'The Fundamental Teachings of Vedanta'—provide, as it were, the foregrounding of Swamiji's thought. The rest deal, in an integral way, with Swamiji's practical Vedanta, his perennial insights into religion as an emancipating force, the harmony of religions and its universal aspects, his impact on the World's Parliament of Religions, his views on human development through work, through education, on Bhakti: There are also vignettes of Swamiji and Madame Calvé, Swamiji's mother Bhuvaneshwari Devi, his responses to Buddha and, what is bound to be of great interest, there is also a deeply moving portrait of Swamiji's 'Boswell', Goodwin. Above all, we also have two extremely significant studies focussing on the implications of Swamiji's thought for the existential philosophy in particular and the modern (Indian) intellectuals in general.

This is a rich repast to satisfy the intellectual and spiritual appetite of even the most devoted and voracious reader and student of Swamiji's thought and life. Viewing Swamiji as a prophet of synthesis—the inevitable consequence of the fact that he 'witnessed a Parliament of Religions almost everyday at Dakshineswar in the life of his Master', (p. 106)—Swami Tathagatananda rightly says that the Vedantic thought of Swamiji is not 'a footnote to Shankara' or a mere gloss on the prevalent, inherited traditions. Thus Swamiji's exposure to the rigorous empiricism of the West meant grappling with it in such a way that it is neither irrationally ignored or defensively



denounced.

In such a context traditional Vedanta has to be contemporised in a practical, pragmatic way. Hindu insights such as 'Karma and maya'—'a double noose on the neck of Hindu race for centuries' as the author picturesquely puts it—need appropriation in new paradigms and the changing scenario of knowledge itself. Indeed, in this 'Axial period in human history', the Vedantic vision, Swamiji rightly saw, holds the potential of a comprehensive system. Swamiji's mission of practical Vedanta was 'to raise mankind to higher and higher levels of existence by the gradual spiritualisation on the vital plane, by the sanctification of the empirical, and the deification of the material.' Vedanta is thus the apotheosis of mankind's aspiration over ages 'to overstep the area of human knowledge and embrace Truth in its totality and entirety' which has been 'the supreme longing of philosophers in all ages and climes.'

The priceless gift given by Swamiji—whether we claim it or leave it unopened is *our* choice—is thus nothing short of, as the author says, 'the Bible of modern healthy living.' For this health, Swamiji's tonic is strength, manliness, the Upanishadic affirmation of fearlessness as the sheet-anchor of all faith. Once this is made central, the other impulses behind human aspirations take their proper place. We culture the emotions through *bhakti*, activate them through *karma* but we also sublimate them through *jnana*. At the root of this is, for Swamiji, the right kind of education—'right' being defined in terms of the total development of the human psyche. If the spiritual orientation is absent, teachers are, as Swami Tathagatananda, in a memorable cluster of metaphoric puns puts it, 'hewers of textbooks and drawers of book-learning' covered 'by falsehood of sophisticated foolishness.' In short, education 'without spiritual motivation simply produces a *rakshasa raj* by starving the spirit.' Even democratic opportunity for education is no antidote for 'we opened the doors' of opportunity but 'failed to open the minds.'

Education redefined in terms of ultimate orientations makes the emergence of

woman-power, the manifestation of the great Shakti lying suppressed in women, imperative, inevitable. For this reason Swamiji always emphasized the emancipation of women (and 'masses') as perceived by themselves and not imposed arbitrarily by men as the one condition of evolutionary growth of any kind, anywhere.

Obviously, Swamiji visualized for India as well as the West a balanced and harmonious blending of the varied facets of the human psyche, a veritable Parliament of Human Orientations. This is not a temporal event of 1893 but an eternal spatial movement increasingly becoming visible today in our renewed interest in Wisdom Traditions, with Swamiji as the inevitable nucleus. Swamiji's comprehensive vision thus offers necessary correctives to excesses of thought and action everywhere. As the author shows, whether it is the nihilistic existentialism of the Sartrean variety or the crisis-crippled post-independent Indian intellectuals ('who live like sheep in free India' while his nineteenth century counterparts 'moved like lions in the dependent India'), Swamiji emphasized 'Atman-centric philosophy of life.'

For the complex religious ethos today, caught between fundamentalism and revivalism, Swamiji's map is a sure guide for the correspondingly perplexed. 'Man, the unknown' has to become 'man the known' and the implicit problem is: 'how to bring forth change in our impure minds, how to transform the dogma-oriented, parochial and superstitious religion of tradition into something which can enable us to broaden our spiritual consciousness and deepen our love for the Divine.'

Broadening is, indeed, harmony of faiths as Swamiji found exemplified in the Great Swan of Dakshineswar. By precept and practice, experience and explication, Sri Ramakrishna validated 'acceptance of plurality of religions, uniqueness of each religion, interreligious dialogue and acceptance of a common standard of validity.'

Obviously *Meditation on Swami Vivekananda* is a meditation on one whose priceless 'gift to America' was, as Ann Myren says, the practice of meditation itself.



And like meditation the book demands and sustains depth reading not surface skimming. With its vigorous ideas, its fascinating range of insights and, above all, its racy style studded with a startling turn of phrase and word, often memorable, this beautifully brought out book is invaluable reading for all those to whom Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Vedanta is, to use Ella Wheeler Wilcox's words, 'fresh water in a long-parched throat.'

Dr. M. Sivaramakrishna,  
Hyderabad

**KRISHNA BAI: By Swami Ramdas;**  
*publ. Anandashram, Kanhangad, Kerala,*  
*671 531; revised 5th edition; 1994; pp. 122;*  
*Rs. 10/-.*

Mother Krishna Bai, a contemporary saint, who passed away just a few years ago, was the foremost disciple of Swami Ramdas, endearingly known to his devotees as *Papa*. The present book is her biography and teachings and is unique in that the guru has written about the life of the disciple.

Krishna Bai was born on a day considered inauspicious and hence was gifted to a monk and repurchased from him, signifying perhaps the course her future life would take. Married at the age of 13, she was widowed at the young age of 20, with two children to look after. This was a turning point in her life. She became extremely indrawn and did intense *sadhana*, but became extremely restless. Chance brought her to Swami Ramdas and from then on, her spiritual personality began to unfold.

In the beginning she was totally devoted to the personal form of her guru, but his guidance and advice helped her to transform this devotion into universal love and service. Later, she herself became a spiritual guide to many seekers of God. As Swami Ramdas says, her life is an 'illustration of how an individual can live a life of intense activity while ever fixed in Divine Consciousness....'

Following the brief life sketch is a lengthy hymn in praise of Mother Krishna Bai by Swami Ramdas. The rest of the book

contains Krishna Bai's answers to questions by devotees and her teachings. Sri Ramakrishna said that all jackals howl alike; Krishna Bai's teachings affirm the truth that all God-men and -women speak alike. She makes the significant observation that while householders succeed in worldly life through self-effort, they expect the guru to do everything for them in spiritual matters. She says real service to the guru is to practise his or her teachings. To a devotee who asks whether Swami Ramdas will be born again if he (the devotee) does not get liberation in this life, she says 'Why postpone eating a ripe fruit which is in the hand,' meaning why let go the opportunity that is available here and now.

Krishna Bai emphasizes reduction of the ego, selfless service and total surrender through constant *nama-japa*. Did not Sri Ramakrishna say that in the Kali Yuga *nama-sankirtan* is the easiest way to God-realization?

This small book will be useful to spiritual aspirants. It also contains some beautiful photographs of Mother Krishna Bai.

Dr. Kamala S. Jaya Rao  
Hyderabad

**ŚVETĀSVATARA-UPANIṢAD; by**  
*Swami Lokeshwarananda; publ.*  
*Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission*  
*Institute of Culture, Calcutta 700 029,*  
*India; 1994; paperback, pp. 255; Rs. 35/-.*

The Upaniṣads constitute the cream of Indian thought and culture. As is well-known, they are the pristine springs of the entire metaphysical structure of the Vedanta, and they contain the priceless wisdom that is embedded in the Vedas, those wonderful records of the intimate, intuitive experiences of the enlightened seers of ancient India. The Upaniṣads are not systematic treatises on Philosophy. Rather, they are half-poetical, half-philosophical works. The Vedic sages who had discovered eternal truths, never cared to present these truths systematically, using philosophical terms and categories. Still, the Upaniṣads



have a social appeal.

It is said that there are more than two hundred texts bearing the name *Upaniṣad*. The *Muktikā-Upaniṣad* gives the names of one hundred and eight *Upaniṣads*. Of these, about a dozen are considered to be very important, and the *Śvetāśvatara* is undoubtedly among them, being one of the *Upaniṣads* Śaṅkara wrote a Commentary on.

Swami Lokeshwaranandaji, a sincere exponent of ancient Indian culture and religion, who has earlier translated other *Upaniṣads*, has brought to light in simple and lucid English the profound thoughts and ideas concerning the Ultimate Reality, Brahman, and related subjects found in the *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad*. And in doing so, he has faithfully followed Śaṅkara's Commentary, making his work authentic and authoritative. In all, there are six chapters in this *Upaniṣad*. Each *śloka* is first presented in Devanāgarī; it is then given in Roman script. The translation of all important Sanskrit words into English with their explanation follows. The chief merit which distinguishes the present work from other similar works is the simplicity and lucidity of presentation which are indicative of a very intimate perception and comprehension of *Upaniṣadic* concepts and ideas. As a result, every serious reader of this work will have no difficulty in understanding the essentials of the *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad*. In other words, a reader will be able to go straight into the inner meaning and implications of the teachings of the *Upaniṣad*, and the language will not stand in the way of their comprehension. This apart, the learned Swami, while bringing out the immense spiritual and intellectual wealth hidden in the *Upaniṣad*, has in the process shown the richness and profundity, the depth and sublimity, of the philosophy of the *Upaniṣads*.

The printing is very clear. The book is moderately priced so that the average person can easily afford it. We highly recommend this book to those who are sincerely interested in having first-hand knowledge of the *Upaniṣadic* philosophy.

Ranjit Kumar Acharjee  
Tripura

**SWAMI VIVEKANANDA:** By Dr. Nimai Sadhan Bose; publ. Sahitya Academy, Rabindra Bhavan, 35 Ferozeshah Road, New Delhi 110 001; 1994; paperback, pp. 125; Rs. 15/-.

The purpose and true significance of the life of a great personage will reveal itself in bold relief if studied against his historical background. Indeed it is an exclusive privilege of the great to have their achievements recognized many years after their own time. New thought-waves coming in the wake of the life of Swami Vivekananda bear testimony to such an extraordinary personality.

The book *Swami Vivekananda* by Sri Nimai Sadhan Bose is a worthy addition to the growing number of books on Vivekananda. It is also unique in some respects. Even though Swami Vivekananda is acknowledged by a number of eminent persons as a master of English prose, the Sahitya Academy by bringing out this volume in its series entitled 'The Makers of Indian Literature' is at last giving public recognition to Swami Vivekananda as a man of letters, albeit late.

This biography is particularly valuable in that it incorporates many new facts about Vivekananda's life which have been brought to light in recent times. Also it has the distinction of being authored by a historian whose knowledge of nineteenth century India is profound.

The book has ten chapters. In the first chapter, 'The Background', Dr. Bose succinctly brings out details of the nineteenth century Bengali Renaissance. Considered to be the first stirrings of the conscience of India, the thought-currents of Bengal of this time began engulfing the entire land in its tidal wave. Here Swami Vivekananda is seen at the cross-roads, with many challenges and options before him. In the next two chapters there is an account of his mission to the West. He was the pioneer in spreading the message of Vedanta across the seas. It is gratifying to observe that the Western world is now showing an awareness of the com-



elling truths of Vedanta, and acknowledging the creative role played by Swamiji in disseminating this knowledge. The chapter 'The West Revisited' enumerates the details of the Congress of Religions held in Oakland in 1900 and describes how the incomparable intelligence and profound wisdom of Swami Vivekananda won the approval of the theologians and intellectuals of the time.

The chapter dealing with the exceptional work Vivekananda did in establishing the Ramakrishna Mission, whose ideals are ennobling as well as practical, is truly impressive if studied against the backdrop of today's religious and communal disharmony.

The account of Swami Vivekananda's work in India is notable. It was Swamiji's dream and mission to reconstruct India—to make her regain her lost glory and greatness. The awakening of the masses, social progress, and religious awareness—these three are inseparably interwoven in his approach to the problems of India. Dr. Bose presents a true picture of a quintessentially spiritual personality who played a pivotal role in the national awakening, and discusses his influence on the great minds of India.

In the epilogue Dr. Bose delineates the vision and strength that Swami Vivekananda instilled in the Indian nation. The book's value is enhanced by the inclusion of extracts from Swamiji's writings as well as a list of select readings.

Br. Akshayachaitanya,  
Ramakrishna Math, Bangalore  
Br. Madhavachaitanya,  
Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta

THE GAME OF GUIDING  
THOUGHTS AND POEMS: By Swami  
Nisreyasananda, Sri Ramakrishna  
Math, Puranattukara, Trichur, Kerala,  
600 551, India; 1994; pp. 169; Rs. 30/-.

One poet complained to the Divine Mother, 'Am I but your plaything that you treat me carelessly? Do you not love me as

your very child?' In this book Swami Nisreyasananda presents the refreshingly contrasting approach reminiscent of the wonderful *Yoga-Vasistha* statement, '*Loke vihara, Rāghava*'—'Sport in this world, O Rāghava.' Significantly the word used is 'sport' and not the phrase, 'act appropriately'. For, if this world is the Lord's game then, we must participate with joy. Play is, in fact, one of the happiest human experiences, is it not? It is often said that a man who would not so much as lift a finger when it comes to work, would perhaps pleasantly trek miles as a part of adventure sports. Thus the Swami asks in one of his poems:

Do men work hard when but  
compelled  
By hunger, thirst, desire or greed?  
Or artists sing or paint to gain  
What food and drink alone can give?

We feel relaxed, get great delight  
When time is spent on sport and art;  
For deep within the human heart  
A built-in urge for play resides.

This spirit of sport, the enthusiasm, pervades the whole book. And we are not surprised to read, in the brief biography supplied at the end, of the Swami's unbounded energy in being with seekers and sowing positive seeds in them. In this book, the Swami gives gentle means whereby thought may be guided in the right direction instead of being suppressed. It is a shifting of attention in twin ways, from the manifestation to the Creator, and again from Him to the created. The latter can be done, he suggests, by reminding that all is empowered by God. Instead of worrying about one's actions or indulging in self-pity, one will then turn towards the task that awaits, the question being not 'Why?' but 'Why not?', 'What next?'

In moving from the many to the one, whatever is experienced must be seen in relation to the Supreme. Expanding on this idea the Swami has moving chapters on how



to get in touch with God's presence, through poetic imagination, in all actions and in all things perceived, especially in the five elements which are the basis of all objects, and in the sense organs which make perception possible. The Swami's explanation of the Tanmatras, the process of creation as described in the Upanishads, from 'space' to 'air', to 'fire', 'water', 'earth' and the living beings is unique in its clarity and simplicity.

Perhaps it is for the first time that the process and its pure logic have been made available in English. How does 'air' become 'fire'? Air, it is pointed out by the Swami, is a term used for want of a better one; it is really movement. And let us think of movement at great velocity. What would then be created by the friction? Fire, of course. And how does fire become water? It is a process of liquefaction—does not fire melt? Through this one suddenly understands Ramana Maharshi's words in 'The Marital Garland of Letters'—'Before burning me and melting me into water, pour your rain of grace, O, Arunachala!' Yes, fire begets water. Thus Swami Nisreyasananda gives marvellous insight into the Lord's creation and misses no opportunity to turn these insights into practical hints for directing thought Godward. One must not mistake it to be an easy task, he warns:

...hard work alone

Makes Wisdom reign where folly ruled!

Yet, it is the spirit in which this work is to be done, which need not be a struggle, a fearsome battle, but an exhilarating game. The Swami through this small volume introduces a great joy into one's approach to spiritual life.

*Dr. Sarada Natarajan,  
Bangalore*

**SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S IMPACT  
AT THE PARLIAMENT OF  
RELIGIONS: By Swami Tathagata-  
nanda; publ. Vedanta Society, New York;  
1993; pp. 43; Rs. 5/-.**

This book is comprised of two articles on

'Swami Vivekananda and the Parliament of Religions' by Swami Tathagatananda. These articles were offered to the general public by the Vedanta Society of New York on the occasion of the Centenary Celebration of the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1993.

In these two articles the author vividly captures the essence of Swami Vivekananda's historic address at the Parliament of Religions on Sept. 11, 1893 at Chicago. The author traces the growth of materialism in the West in the nineteenth century and its baneful effects. These divisive forces resulted in a spiritually fragmented and truncated existence. Into this arid spiritual landscape, Swami Vivekananda's holistic approach to life and religion came as a refreshing and invigorating moral stimulus to an integrated perception of life. Swami Vivekananda introduced Hinduism as a religion that was based on tolerance and universal acceptance. By stressing on the universal character of religious truth and the common goal of all religious experiences, he spoke eloquently about the 'Oneness of humanity, the non-duality of the Godhead, harmony of religions, and the divinity of the soul' (p.3). Swami Vivekananda came to the West with the message of universal brotherhood contained in the illuminating thoughts of the Vedanta.

The author narrates the electrifying effect that Swami Vivekananda's brief speech had on the Western audience. Swami Vivekananda spoke about the essential spirituality of life, thus paving the way for a new approach based on positive thinking and mutual harmony.

The author's language is simple, and his exposition is marked by coherence, clarity and conviction.

*Dr. Rama Nair,  
Secunderabad*

**HINDU FESTIVALS AND SACRED  
DAYS: By Swami Harshananda; publ.  
Ramakrishna Math, Bangalore, Kar-  
nataka, 560 019; pp. 113; Rs. 15/-.**

Here is another nice little book from the



facile pen of Swami Harshanandaji, one of the distinguished monks of the Ramakrishna Order. Hindu festivals and sacred days are interwoven into the life of an average Hindu and they play an important role in his/her life. The learned author remarks in the Introduction: 'Rituals, though designed to reflect the basic philosophy of life, also help to release [people's] energies and emotions through constructive channels, since they are action-oriented.'

Apart from this, rituals performed in connection with worship and thought of God are a disciplinary practice. They teach us self-control, self-discipline, the spirit of cooperation, and the way to do unselfish work. The secret purpose of religious rituals is the mental and physical purification of the individual who performs them, but observers and by-standers also benefit. However, we must provide education on Hindu rituals and festivals because, as commonly observed, all these things are being misunderstood and misinterpreted by our younger generations. They are not deeply informed about our proud Vedantic culture, philosophy and spiritual tradition.

Here comes the significance of this slender volume. It is written to educate society, particularly young persons, about our festivals so that unhealthy materialistic and commercial attractions may not harm them. Serious and meaningful observance of our religious traditions must be preserved. Only thus can society derive greater spiritual benefit.

*Hindu Festivals and Sacred Days* with its Introduction, Key to transliteration, Index and Epilogue fulfils an important need. The chapters give essential information on Hindu religious festivals (*utsavas*), both major and less important ones, and on the religious vows (*vratas*) of the devotees. As the Swami mentions in the Preface, the approach to the subject is both theoretical and practical. On the theoretical side it tries to give a correct understanding and significance of commonly observed festivals, and on the practical side, deals with the know-how for conducting these festivals. The Epilogue contains some useful sugges-

tions for the organizers of these festivals in public.

Festivals and sacred days celebrated by all the branches of the Ramakrishna Order are given in the Appendix. A list of the birth dates of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda and other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna is included. The book will be of interest to everyone. This new volume fulfilling a timely need is a welcome addition to the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature.

*Dr. Chetana Mandavia, Junagadh*

**SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND A FLOWER OF HIS VISION: By Prof. (Dr.) Tarun Dev Moulick, Dean of Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan's Vivekananda Institute of Medical Sciences; publ. Swami Ramananda, Secretary, Seva Pratishthan and Vivekananda Institute of Medical Sciences, Calcutta, 700 026; 1993; price not mentioned.**

Through this small booklet the author conveys a glowing tribute to Swami Dayanandaji, the distinguished monk of the Ramakrishna Order and founder of Seva Pratishthan, the Order's huge hospital situated in Calcutta. He also dedicates this book to the makers of success of the Institute. According to him, today Seva Pratishthan enjoys the reputation of being the cleanest hospital. Services are of the highest standard and the love and care shown by the hospital staff to the patients are considered its distinct features. The author, though a busy surgeon, pays his tribute with ease and charm in the form of beautiful verses composed by him.

In his first poem, 'Voyage of Victory', the poet-author with impressive thoroughness takes the reader along with Swami Vivekananda from Bombay to Chicago via Colombo, Singapore, Honk Kong, Japan and Canada. The poem also gives a brief account of Swamiji's meetings with persons who helped him when he represented India as a delegate to the Parliament of Religions.

Inspired by Swami Vivekananda, a bril-



liant youth joined the Ramakrishna Order and flourished to become an unforgettable karmayogi—Swami Dayananda. The second poem throws light on the life of this holy sannyasin who perceived, practised and preached Vivekananda's practical Vedanta. The Swami's selfless service, austere life, dedication and elevated state of mind makes a lasting impression on the reader's mind.

The third poem depicts the history of Seva Pratishthan; how a small maternity institution, named 'Shishumangal', giving pre-natal and post-natal care was started on a modest basis in 1932 by Swami Dayanandaji and over a period of time was developed into the huge general hospital of today. It is now a reputed hospital of India where sophisticated new medical technologies are made economically viable. The hospital's educational wing, recognized by the Medical Council of India for Post-Graduate Teaching and Research, is now famous as the Vivekananda Institute of Medical Sciences.

## BOOKS RECEIVED

A beautifully got-up Special Number of *Sri Hari Katha (The Gospel of God)* (Hindi), with all the three parts of the *Kalki-Purana*, Sanskrit verses with Hindi translation; pp. 214, price not mentioned; available from Editor, *Sri Hari Katha*, B-5/73, Azad Apartments, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi 110 016.

The following titles have all been received from **Motilal Banarsidass Publishers (Pvt. Ltd.)**, 41-A, Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007.

1. **REVOLUTION OF THE MYSTICS** (On the Social Aspects of Viraśaivism): By J.P. Schouten; first Indian edition 1995; pp. 330; clothbound Rs. 250/-.

2. **HINDU SPIRITUALITY** (Vedas through Vedanta): edited by Krishna Sivaraman; first Indian edition 1995; pp. 447; paperback Rs. 190/-.

Other items included by Prof. Dev Moulick are some speeches by him delivered at the conferences and workshops organized at the Institute, and a verse conversion from a letter written in Bengali prose by the great poet Rabindranath Tagore.

This small booklet in simple verses gives revealing glimpses of Swami Vivekananda's vision—'*Siva Jnane Jiva Seva*'—a means to realize God by serving the people and how his vision has flowered in the form of Seva Pratishthan—through the worshipful attitude not only of the Swami Dayananda and other veteran monks of the Order but also by dedicated doctors, nurses and other workers associated in the various roles. A nice, informative and inspiring publication and a fitting tribute to the architects of Seva Pratishthan by a dedicated doctor and Dean of the Institute.

Dr. Chetana Mandavia,  
Junagadh

3. **THE ESSENTIALS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY**: By M. Hiriyanna; first Indian edition 1995; pp. 216; paperback Rs. 98/-; clothbound Rs. 150/-.

4. **INTEGRAL NON-DUALISM**: By Kan-shi Ram (Reader, Dept. of Sanskrit, Hans Raj College, University of Delhi); 1995; pp. 189; clothbound Rs. 175/-.

5. **SONIC THEOLOGY** (Hinduism and Sacred Sound): By Guy L. Beck; first Indian edition 1995; pp. 290; clothbound Rs. 195/-.



Life is the unfoldment and development of a being under circumstances tending to press it down.

—Swami Vivekananda